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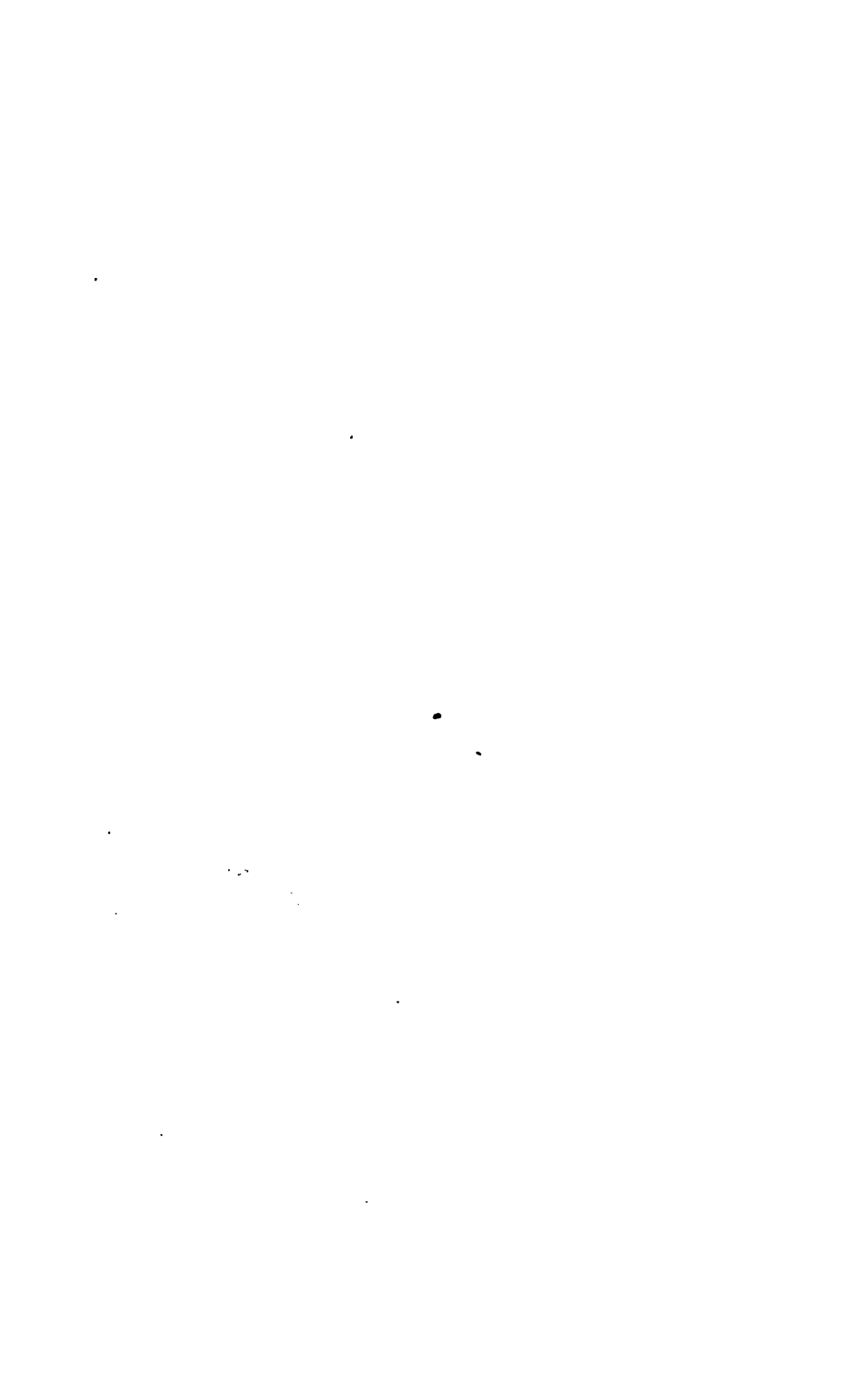




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# ARTHUR

OR,

## A KNIGHT OF OUR OWN DAY.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "ALICE GODOLPHIN."

"Indeed he seems to me  
Scarce other than my own ideal knight."—TENNYSON.

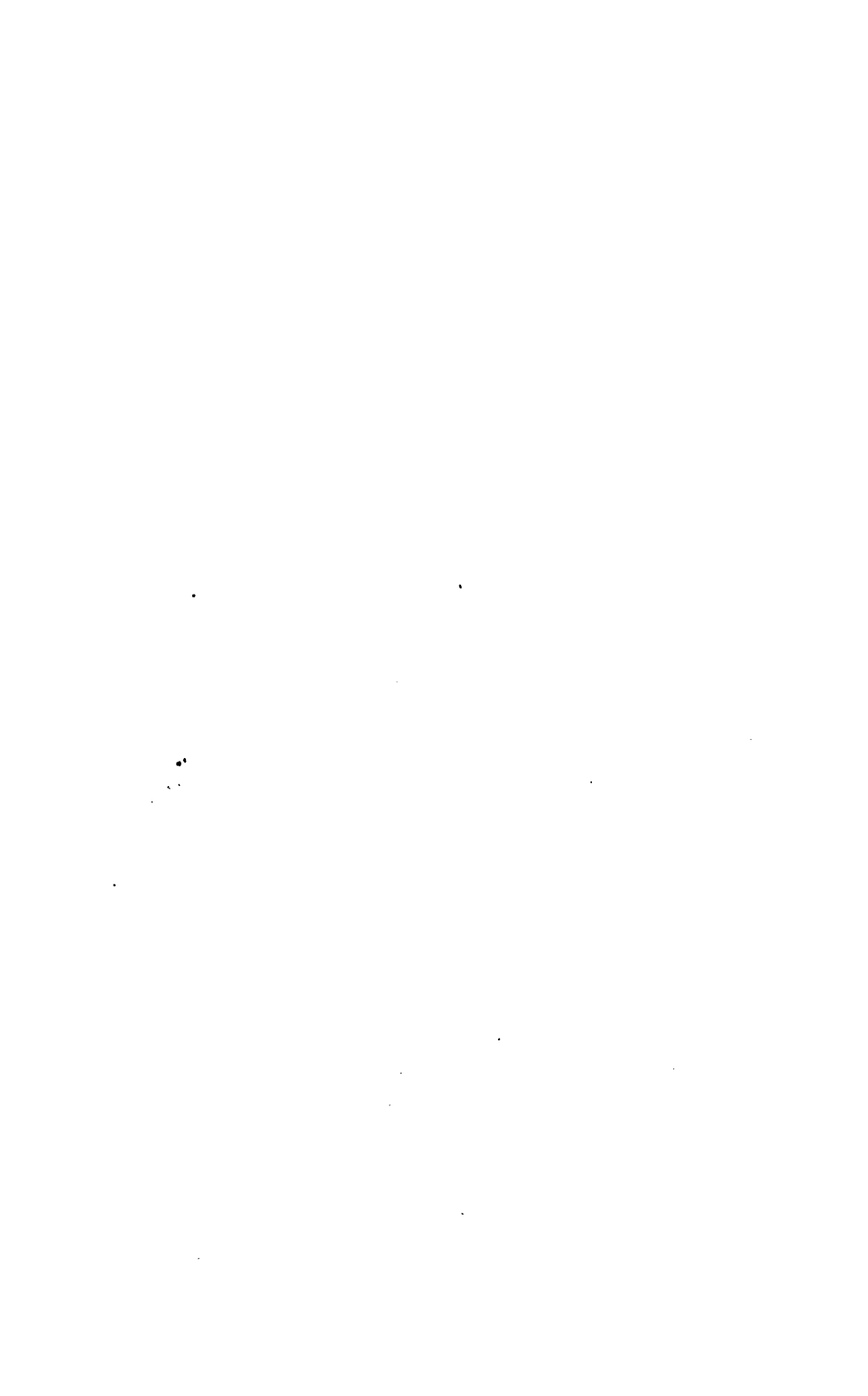
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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1876.

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# ARTHUR ;

OR,

## A KNIGHT OF OUR OWN DAY.

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### CHAPTER I.

"Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,  
Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart."  
GRAY.

NEXT morning Ida wrote a farewell letter to Lady Laura, in which she judiciously refrained from making any mention of Lord Trevor's proposed chaperonage. The day was bright and sunny, and Brighton was looking its best—as is often the case with a place when we are on the point of leaving it.

Ida felt as if she had never duly appreciated it.

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ciated the cheerful Parade, the varied and amusing scenes, and the salt, fresh, bracing air of this fascinating town. The wintry scene at Arling seemed in prospect more dull and monotonous than ever by force of contrast. Altogether she was not in the brightest spirits when she got to the station, and did *not* meet with her promised escort. However, five minutes before the train started he made his appearance, hot and panting, and was just in time to get her ticket, dispose of the luggage, and see her comfortably settled in a reserved carriage, well provided with rugs, newspapers, hot-water tins, and every luxurious accompaniment to a railway journey in winter.

It did not strike Ida till long afterwards that he was purposely late in order to avoid the scrutiny of any impertinent scandal-mongers who might be hanging about the station. She was somewhat mystified to find that his manner had resumed much of his cold reserve : nothing could be more attentive and respectful than his conduct, but the "frosty Caucasus" could not be more chill.

This was partly the effect of habit,<sup>1</sup> but still more the result of reflection.

Whatever it might be for Ida, a night of feverish and wakeful thought<sup>1</sup> had convinced his lordship that he must not indulge himself in that easy, pleasant conversation which had passed away an hour so happily the day before. If there was to be peace and safety in his intercourse with this fair enchantress, it must be purchased at the heavy cost of a constant repression of his feelings, a cold, measured, formal civility, never varying, never warming up into anything more natural and agreeable.

Ida watched him narrowly as he sat in the corner of the carriage opposite to her, apparently deeply engaged in the study of the *Pall Mall* and her observant eyes did not fail to notice that though he seldom raised his eyes from the paper, he *never turned a page*.

What a handsome face it was, she thought to herself, as she continued her uninterrupted scrutiny. What a noble brow—higher and smoother even than Arthur's!

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 amusing scenes, and the salt, fresh, bracing  
 air of this charming town. The wintry  
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 dull and uninteresting than ever by force of  
 contrast. Altogether she was not in the  
 brightest spirits when she got to the station,  
 and she was not a little disappointed to find  
 that the weather was not so good as she  
 expected. However, she soon recovered her  
 spirits, and was in a very agreeable  
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It was not long before she was  
 joined by her friends, and they all  
 went to the station. She was not  
 a little disappointed to find that  
 the weather was not so good as  
 she expected. However, she soon  
 recovered her spirits, and was in  
 a very agreeable humour when  
 she got to the station.





what wavy, abundant hair! what a dark, thick sweep of lashes hiding the beautiful, mournful eyes! Ah! they well deserved that epithet now. Three months before they had been merry sparkling eyes—eyes that, as Lady Laura used to say, “made one feel *warm* to look at them.” Three months ago his form had been robust, his bearing erect and noble, his manner winning and cheerful, and his gay, ringing laugh a sound it did one good to hear. *Now*, he had the appearance of a man who is passing through the first stages of some dangerous and wasting disease. The happy *abandon* of the young man was gone for ever, and in its place had come a nervous sort of irritability, which was equally distressing to himself and to his friends.

Love—disappointed, craving, misplaced love—had much to do with these sad changes, but other feelings had taken a part in causing them. At heart Lord Trevor was a religious man—a little too much addicted, perhaps, to the world and its pleasures, but still, at heart, a religious

man. Judge, then, of the conflict which would surely take place in the mind of such a man when subjected to the temptation of a sin heinous in itself, and peculiarly abhorrent in its nature to one of his sensitive, honourable character ; and yet, a temptation so strong that he found himself powerless to turn and flee from it. "Anything but that," he often sighed to himself in the course of that railway journey ; "*anything but that.*" Sooner than put that glittering temptation out of his reach for ever, sooner than fly the country and betake himself to some distant land, where that sweet face should no longer come between him and his prayers, between him and his God, he would throw himself into that calm, peaceful sea, and seek to find rest in its solitary depths.

Little did Ida guess the storm of wild, half-remorseful, half-desperate thought that was raging in the breast of the silent man opposite her. If she had she might have let him alone. As it was, she soon grew tired of the silence, and leant forward to

speaking, throwing her discarded paper on the seat beside her.

"Do you intend to remain long in Brighton, Lord Trevor?"

"I think not. I believe I shall be leaving for London in a few days."

"You are missing the hunting-season."

"Yes; my horses are doing nothing all this winter. I had some thoughts of bringing them down to Daylesford, near your part of the world, and having a few runs with Mr. Fletcher's harriers."

"Oh! I wish you would. Arthur would join you, and it would be some amusement for him this long winter. I think a meet must be the prettiest sight in the world. I never saw one."

"Arthur would not like you to ride?"

"Not after the hounds, perhaps, though I don't know why he should object. Many ladies do."

"Many *women* do."

"You mean that you do not think it ladylike?"

"I would rather not express a decided

opinion on the subject; many women hunt of high rank and excellent position, and yet—well, I should be sorry to see any lady friend of mine in the field. I should be sorry if Arthur gave *you* permission to appear there.”

“Come, Lord Trevor, let us have a bet on the subject. You say Arthur would not allow me to hunt. I say that he *will*, and that if you come down to Daylesford in a month’s time you will see me riding as straight as any lady there, though I have never yet been on a horse’s back in my life.”

“That is a confident assertion, Mrs. Atherstone; though if you learn to ride as quickly as you learned to skate——”

“You accept the bet, then? What shall it be—a dozen pairs of gloves?”

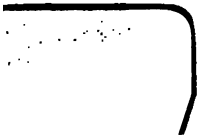
“No; pardon me—I do not accept the bet. I would rather not make one on that subject, for it would be an incitement to you to try and win it.”

Ida threw herself back in her seat with





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It may be mentioned here that Lord Trevor's friend must have resided inside the railway station, or the business of luncheon must have been accomplished with extraordinary celerity, for in ten minutes after Ida's train had steamed out of the little station, his lordship was again on the platform, and securing a seat in an opportune down train from London, was soon whirled back to the sea-side metropolis.

In that ten minutes Ida had reached Arling, and there stood Arthur on the platform, his bright face and sunny blue eyes beaming with pleasure at the sight of his lovely young wife. Well, it *was* very pleasant to be home again. After all the glare and noisy bustle of Brighton (not to mention other new and less harmless excitements), it gave Ida a soothing sense of rest and peace to walk down the quiet familiar lane, leaning on Arthur's arm, listening to Arthur's tender loving words. The glittering parade at Brighton, the gaily dressed fashionable throng, above all,

Lord Trevor's sad, dark, handsome face, all faded away (for the moment) as if they had been but feverish creations of her fancy, and she only felt that Arling was dear to her, with all its faults, and that it was a good thing to be so cherished and cared for as she was.

Lady Atherstone was waiting to receive them in the drawing-room. She came forward kindly to greet her daughter-in-law, and Ida shyly submitted to be kissed, and petted, and made much of, and finally persuaded to eat a very substantial luncheon, her sea-side appetite not having yet forsaken her. Sir Hugh was not visible till the evening, so after lunch Arthur offered to escort his wife to the Rectory.

"Thank you for nothing, sir," she replied smiling. "I can manage a journey of that extent by myself, but this morning you would have been of some use. If Lord Trevor had not taken pity on me, and come with me as far as Thurleswood, I

doubt whether I should ever have made my appearance here at all."

Lady Atherstone looked distressed, but Arthur said quietly,

"It is such an easy journey, darling, no changes at all; if it had been otherwise, we would have provided an escort for you."

"It is something new for Lord Trevor to be a squire of dames," remarked Lady Atherstone.

"He is always very kind to me, for Arthur's sake," said Ida hastily, as she rose and put on her hat. "No, Arthur, don't you come. Your father will want you perhaps, and I should like to have Elizabeth all to myself for an hour."

And without more words, she opened the door, and in another moment they caught sight of her running down the lane.

"What a child it is," said Lady Atherstone, with her loving indulgent smile, "and how very pretty. If all be 'equal to what is up-come,' as the old Scotch proverb says, you have secured a treasure, Arthur."

"She is as good and sweet as she is lovely, mother," was his warm reply. "I hope some day (you will not like to think so yet) she may take dear Mary's place in your heart, and in this house."

Lady Atherstone gave a slight irrepressible shake of her head, but her kindness of heart suppressed the quick answer that rose to her lips. Inwardly she felt *that* could never be; this merry laughing golden-haired fairy, at once so wilful and so sweet, so spoilt and so loving, could never in any way take the place of her own gentle serene calm-eyed Mary. Yet she could not but warmly approve of her son's choice, and feel greatly cheered by the presence of such a beautiful joyous creature.

Meanwhile Ida had reached the Rectory, and burst like a radiant vision upon Elizabeth, who was sitting by the fire endeavouring to cast up accounts, a process rendered unusually troublesome, by the weary languid sensations which a fit of acute neuralgia leaves behind it. But she forgot all her aches and pains as Ida entered, fresh and

glowing from her hasty walk, and the two sisters were straightway locked in each other's arms.

"My darling, how well you are looking," was her first exclamation, "the sea air has done you good!"

"Yes, dear old woman, I wish you could have a taste of it. Why, Elizabeth, you are looking quite pale and haggard, what *have* you been doing to yourself?"

"Neuralgia, dear, that is all, my old enemy. Papa is better to-day, but he has been laid up too for some time."

"Ah, I thought I should find you all on the sick list. I hope the curate is not laid up too."

"No; happily he has kept well, but it has been a trying winter. Now, Ida, tell me all about your travels. How did you like Brighton?"

"Oh, the most perfect place! Such brilliant sunshine, while you have been having these dismal fogs! I think we had only two wet days all the time. And I made hosts of friends. There was a Lady

Laura Marjoribanks—oh, I told you about her, didn't I?"

"Yes, you mentioned her several times in your letters. What a nice person she must be. And Arthur's friend, Lord Trevor, do you like him as much as ever?"

To her sister's surprise, a sudden rush of colour came over Ida's cheeks, and her answer came slowly and reluctantly.

"Oh yes, he is very nice in his way, he is rather—rather *peculiar*."

A moment's pause, then Ida threw herself down on her old seat by the fire, and glanced up archly into her sister's face, as she said,

"And now tell me all about Mr. Norman. When am I to greet him as my future brother-in-law?"

"Now Ida, that is Mrs. Fletcher's foolish gossip, you ought not to repeat it to me."

"Seriously, Elizabeth, have you no idea of marrying him?"

"Seriously, Ida, he has no idea of marrying me."

"I don't believe that."



Silence for a moment, then Elizabeth bent forward and spoke very earnestly, the fire-light falling on her pale face, with its gentle, yet resolute expression.

“Ida, darling, I just want to say a word on this subject, and then we need never enter upon it again. Mr. Norman and I have been unavoidably thrown a good deal together, especially since papa has been so poorly, and I believe some of our neighbours have chosen to gossip and talk about it, and Mrs. Fletcher even went so far one day as to tell me she was sure we were privately engaged. It is not true, dear Ida, it *never* can be true. Mr. Norman is really not a marrying man; he is quite absorbed in his profession, and he does not approve of the clergy being hindered with the cares of a family. And even if he wished it, I could never consent, I could never look upon him in any other light but that of a good and useful friend, who deserves all our respect and appreciation.”

“I believe you are deceiving yourself, Elizabeth,” replied Ida firmly, “and if you

are really in earnest, and mean all you have said, I can only say that you are a great goose. Some girls may take their choice as to whether they care to marry or not, but *we* have no choice, Elizabeth. Poor dear papa cannot live for ever, and after his death you will be a pauper, a literal pauper."

"Ida, Ida, don't talk so!"

"Well, what is the harm?"

"No harm exactly, but it jars upon one. Besides it is not quite true, I shall have enough (even in the event of our dear father's death, or his becoming incapacitated for any duty) to live as a lady—I do not desire more, I have never had any luxuries, and I do not care for them."

"‘Mine be a cot beside the rill,’"

quoted Ida, half scornfully. "Now, my dear good sister, do be rational and ‘take the goods the gods provide’ you, like a sensible woman. Providence (I speak quite reverently, so don't look shocked) providence—instead of some wretched lean half-starved curate with a consumptive wife and twelve

children, which we *might* have had, has chosen to send us an excellent young man with the morals of an Apostle and the face and figure of an Adonis, with no encumbrances, very well connected, and at least a thousand a year. You, as the model clergyman's daughter, are thrown into frequent and intimate companionship with this Phoenix, you are associated together in divers charities, you meet every day in your visits to the poor people, every Sunday at the school. *He* is attracted by your unassuming worth and sweetness, *you* cannot fail to appreciate the many favourable characteristics of his mind and position, consequently, as a natural sequence, you fall in love and are married. What can be more natural and proper? Society expects it of you, *we* expect it of you. Elizabeth, it must be done."

Almost gasping with astonishment and dismay, Elizabeth returned no answer for a minute or two, and then said in a hurt trembling voice,

"Oh, Ida! who has taught you all this?"

To which her sister replied with commendable brevity, in two words,

"Lady Laura."

"I thought so; at least I judged some one had put all these cold worldly diplomatic notions into your head. You do not mean them, Ida dear, you do not *really* wish me to marry a man I do not love, simply because of the worldly advantage that might accrue from it?"

"Why not? I did."

"My darling, do not talk so, it cuts me to the heart. I always feared you did not care much for Arthur, but surely, *surely* you have learnt to love him by this time. He is so true, so kind, so honourable, and so completely devoted to you."

"Well, it is a great blessing and advantage to be rich," said Ida, shifting her ground.

"Riches cannot buy happiness."

"Well, they can buy a very good imitation of it."

"But, Ida, one more word, you *are* happy, darling, tell me the truth, do not

deceive me. No, I can see in your face that you are quite content, you only said *that* to tease me, is it not so, dear?"

"You seem to have settled the question quite comfortably in your own mind," laughed Ida, as she fastened her seal-skin jacket close round her white throat. "Yes, you dear old-fashioned body, of course I am happy, and shall be happier still when Arthur has taken a house in London. Now I will just run upstairs, for a peep at papa, and then I must race home, or I shall keep them waiting for tea—ah, how funny it seems not to be dining here!"

Five minutes passed, and then Elizabeth saw the light familiar figure flit across the lawn, and down the gravel path. She followed it with a loving, yearning gaze, till the darkness intervened, and then went back to her own solitary meal in the empty little drawing-room.

## CHAPTER II.

“Of manners gentle, of affections mild,  
In wit a man, simplicity a child.”

POPE.

“ARTHUR, dear, do come out with me; it has left off raining now, and it is so dull in the house.”

“My dear child, how can I? Look at that pile of letters: they must every one be answered, and sent off by this morning’s post.”

“I wish your father was able to transact his own business” (a little pettishly).

“Indeed, I wish he was,” answered Arthur, with a heavy sigh.

Again there was dead silence in the library, only broken by the monotonous

scratch, scratch, of the writer's pen. Ida stood motionless by the window, a drooping, forlorn-looking figure dressed in black, her golden hair carelessly twisted up in a loose coil, the pretty plaits and curls had been all left behind at Brighton. There is the old expression of weary discontent on her face, and her cheeks have lost their fresh seaside bloom.

Poor child ! it was rather a dreary life for her. Lady Atherstone—dear, kind, motherly soul as she was—was a woman of considerable method, and liked everything to be done in her own regular, orderly, old-fashioned way—a way which had become second nature to her own daughters, but which appeared singularly irksome to Ida. Her ladyship expected her daughter-in-law to be down punctually at half-past eight to prayers, which were followed by a long dawdling breakfast (it seemed so, at least, to the active younger lady); then came the visit to Sir Henry, always a melancholy and sometimes a very trying duty; then Lady Atherstone expected Ida to bring her work

and sit in the drawing-room till about twelve o'clock, when they would take a slow constitutional stroll through the gardens if it was fine, through the conservatories if it was wet. In the afternoon it was a little better. Arthur would take his young wife for a brisk walk or ride (she was learning to ride now), and then they would sometimes end by going to the Rectory, and having tea with Elizabeth in the dear old familiar drawing-room, out of the dear old familiar teacups. But sometimes Lady Atherstone would take a fancy into her head that Ida was leading too solitary a life for so young a person, and must positively go out and visit her neighbours, and see a little of the world. The heavy family coach was then ordered round at three o'clock, and the two ladies set out on a round of visits to the neighbouring country aristocracy—good, dull, worthy people, who were full of every kind feeling towards the young bride, but who only succeeded in boring her almost beyond the power of endurance.



Back again then to the large melancholy Grange, where the evenings were usually passed by Ida in dead silence, Lady Atherstone dozing in her chair, and Arthur sitting with his father in his own room upstairs. At nine o'clock he came down, but even then the utter unselfishness of his nature operated to the detriment of poor Ida's comfort. Lady Atherstone would wake out of her comfortable nap, and express a desire for a game of chess with her son—a quiet diversion of which she was exceedingly fond, so fond indeed as to make her quite chagrined if she lost, and to put her in a state of gentle and subdued hilarity if she won. Ida did not know the game and did not care to learn: it seemed to her to be a stupid, wearisome way of passing the shining hours; and she frequently retired to bed early, leaving them still absorbed in abstruse plans and calculations for taking a castle or checking a queen.

Yes, no doubt it was a colourless, monotonous life, very unsuited to a gay young

girl—one, too, who had lately enjoyed her first taste of the sweets of fashionable society, and had learnt what it was to be courted and admired. The Rectory life had been quiet, enough, but there, at any rate, Ida had enjoyed full liberty ; Elizabeth's gentle sway had scarcely made itself felt in the household, and after all, in spite of much grumbling and discontent, the girls had not been without their own little excitements and pleasures. These were at an end now.

The kind notice of the neighbouring gentry, which had once been a matter of such great and absorbing anxiety to Ida, was a matter of very little moment to her now, and the successful re-turning of old dresses and bonnets, which used to occupy pleasantly so much of her spare time, would have been an unsuitable and unnecessary employment for her now. Somehow, none of the elegant French *tournures* that were purchased in Brighton or sent down from London ever gave her so much real satisfaction as the becoming old hat with the

blue feather in which she had driven into Daylesford on that memorable day, and captivated the wandering, indifferent glances of Lord Trevor.

Wealth has its disadvantages, and among the greatest of these is satiety.

On this particular morning it had been raining steadily from eight o'clock till twelve, so the ladies had been for their usual dreary stroll in the conservatory, where Lady Atherstone had inspected her camellias and sniffed at her orange-blossoms till Ida had lost all patience, and devised some transparent excuse for getting back to the house, to see "what Arthur was doing with himself, and if he wanted her."

Finding him so hopelessly engaged, she leant quietly against the window-seat as we have described, and gazed out at the still wet, but slowly brightening, prospect. After a few minutes, however, her face lost its listless expression, and she bent forward with a sudden exclamation—

"Oh, Arthur, you must leave off writing now—here is Mr. Norman!"

A slight expression of impatience from the busy writer, then he answered hurriedly—

“You must go to him, Ida, dear. This business is really important; I can’t delay it for half-an-hour.”

“But your mother is not in the house.”

“Oh! well, you can see him alone. Don’t be afraid of me; I shall not be jealous.”

He looked up for a moment with his arch merry smile, and then scratch, scratch, went the pen again.

Ida stood irresolute for a moment, and just then “Mr. Norman” was announced to be in the drawing-room, and she was obliged to leave Arthur in peace, and go to receive the visitor. She had never yet spoken to the curate, though they had now been nearly three weeks at Arling. He had left his card, and of course they had often had opportunities of meeting, but, with his usual half-shy, half-conscientious avoidance of what he considered to be the personified pomps and vanities of the world,

the curate had purposely kept aloof as much as possible from the Grange party and the beautiful young bride.

This morning, however, he had an errand to fulfil, and what he considered a duty to perform. Under these circumstances, a whole phalanx of lovely and fashionable young women would not have succeeded in turning him from his purpose.

He shook hands with Ida with his usual courteous, rather stiff, manner, and straightway entered upon his business.

"I must ask you to excuse so early a visit, Mrs. Atherstone; my afternoons are so occupied that I can seldom find time to pay calls at the usual hour. I came to speak about your father."

"About papa! I was coming down to see him this afternoon. Has anything happened, Mr. Norman?"

"No, nothing alarming; nothing that has not been coming on for some time. I am convinced that Mr. Helmore is in a very unsatisfactory state of health."

"Ah, his rheumatism is always troublesome at this time of year."

"It is not that; I fear it is his head. I saw Miss Helmore a few minutes ago, and she wished me to ask you to come down as soon as you could. I went in to see him, and he scarcely appeared to know me."

"I will get my hat at once. You don't think it is anything very serious, Mr. Norman?"

"I hope not; I should think not, but it is a great anxiety and responsibility for Miss Helmore. I think she ought not to be quite alone, and she is not at all well herself."

Ida had left the room before he finished his sentence, and soon re-appeared in her garden hat, a white shawl thrown carelessly over her shoulders. Mr. Norman was standing by the window, he turned round quickly as Ida entered, and said—

"Shall I return to the Rectory with you, Mrs. Atherstone? Perhaps I may be of some use."

"Oh, thank you, if you would be so

kind. Arthur is very busy this morning, or I would not think of troubling you."

"It is no trouble. I could not feel easy till I had seen him again."

Without more words they left the house, and in five minutes had reached the Rectory, and Ida stood by her father's bedside. The old man lay perfectly calm and peaceful, his placid expression had not altered, and there was still a faint tinge of colour in his cheeks. But when his daughter bent down to speak to him, there was no answering gleam of recognition in the eyes that were wont to beam so lovingly upon her; his hand lay quietly in hers, the dear old hand, wan and wrinkled with many years of labour, but there was no answering pressure.

Elizabeth stood by his side dry-eyed but very pale. So absorbed was she in watching, that she scarcely noticed her sister's entrance.

"How long has he been so?" whispered Ida.

"Since about ten o'clock this morning.

He seemed as well as usual when he took his breakfast, and said he had had a good night. I have sent for Mr. North. Ida, listen, is that his carriage?"

There was a grating of wheels on the gravel outside, and Mr. North entered, a fine-looking man of middle age, fresh-faced, and kind-eyed. He went straight to the bed, and carefully examined his patient, scarcely pausing to recognize the two girls. After a few minutes of breathless suspense he looked up with his pleasant smile.

"Do not be alarmed, Miss Helmore, this is not paralysis, nothing of the kind. He has fallen into a comatose state induced by excessive weakness, and over-exertion of the brain. You will find that he will revive in a short time, and then you will have nothing to do but to keep him perfectly quiet."

He wrote a prescription, gave a few general directions, promised to look in again before night, and left them considerably cheered and relieved.

Elizabeth was instantly busied in carry-



ing out the orders she had received, and begged Ida to return at once to the Grange.

"Indeed, dear," she said earnestly, "I would rather be alone. I can do everything with Sarah's help, and you can be of no use. Lady Atherstone may be wanting you."

"You will let me know at once if there is any change?"

"Yes; you may depend on that. Don't cry, Ida, darling, we shall get over this bravely."

Neither would she accept Mr. Norman's offer of remaining with her father, so there was nothing to be done but to let her have her own way, and Ida and the curate left the house together.

With the elasticity of extreme youth Mrs. Atherstone had already dried her eyes, and before she reached the garden-gate had persuaded herself that she had been unnecessarily alarmed, and that a day or two of careful nursing would see her father completely restored to health.

Mr Norman did not try to deceive

her, but his grave face haunted her all day as a sort of dim presentiment of sorrow to come. At the Lodge she met Lady Atherstone, a black woollen shawl thrown round her head and shoulders, to protect her from the keen wind.

"My dear Ida," she exclaimed, "where have you been? I have been hunting for you all through the gardens."

"I have been down to the Rectory, Lady Atherstone; my father is not well."

"Indeed! Nothing of any consequence, I hope?"

"Well, no, Mr. North does not seem alarmed; but I don't like his looks. Elizabeth has promised to send for me at once if there is any change."

Ida's manner was so composed, that Lady Atherstone supposed there was not much amiss, and taking her daughter-in-law's arm, they walked quietly together up the avenue.

"I am glad to have met you, dear child," remarked the elder lady. "I want to

“speak to you about Arthur, and to hear your opinion on a little plan I have formed.”

“About Arthur! There is nothing the matter with *him*, is there?”

“Nothing the matter exactly,” in a somewhat dignified tone of voice; “but I think he is looking rather pale and dispirited. I have thought so ever since we came here.”

“I have not noticed it.”

“No? Well, it may be only my fancy; but it strikes me that he looks rather depressed, and he certainly leads too sedentary a life for so young a man.”

“Yes; I can’t think why he stays in so much. He scarcely ever rides now.”

“He has had a good deal of business to get through lately, and of course he wishes to be in constant attendance on his father: still, he ought to get out more. I have been thinking, Ida, whether it would be a good plan to ask his old friend, Lord Trevor, to come here for a time. They would have some hunting together, and it would be an

incentive to Arthur to take long walks, and rouse himself a little."

"Dear Lady Atherstone, you would not like it."

"That is a matter of very little consequence, dear. Of course I should *not* like it, so soon after my dear child's death"—(here the gentle voice faltered a little).—"It can be no pleasure to me to receive any visitor here. But Lord Trevor is an old friend of ours; I should not feel under any constraint with him. If it is necessary for Arthur's health and happiness that he should have some friend here, I should prefer him to any one else. What do you think about it?"

The day before it is possible that Ida might have given an evasive or even a favourable reply to this suggestion, but some holy, calming influence imparted from the scene she had just quitted seemed to hang over her, and for once she suffered duty instead of inclination to gain the ascendant. There was no wavering in the tone in which she replied—

"I do not see any necessity for Lord Trevor's being asked here. Arthur seems to me to be as well and cheerful as can be expected. I think he looks better than when we were going out so much at Brighton."

Lady Atherstone pressed the slight arm on which she leaned as she replied with a playful smile—

"A young wife's eyes are not so keen as a mother's, Ida; depend upon it I am right. Arthur has been used to a life of constant variety and adventure with his regiment, and this dull little village must appear tame in all respects to him. Young women have many sources of interest and amusement which are unknown to young men"—(Ida wondered what these were);—"no girl who possesses a well-regulated mind should complain of the quiet of a home, but men are very different. A gentle ride with you, or a slow walk with me, is not enough, even of physical exertion, for Arthur. Do you see what I mean?"

"Well, let him go out with the hounds

if it is healthy exercise for him, only why have Lord Trevor here ?”

“ Because Arthur will never be persuaded to go out alone for his own sole amusement. He would not enjoy himself thoroughly if he did ; I know he would be thinking all the time that he ought to be with his father or you. I do think he is the most unselfish young man I ever saw or heard of in my life.”

“ And you think if Lord Trevor was here it would be a good excuse for making Arthur ride with him ?”

“ Exactly.”

“ Well, then, ask him. I can make no objection, Lady Atherstone ; this is not my house.”

They had reached the hall door, and Ida was about to enter the house, when Lady Atherstone laid a detaining hand on her arm.

“ My dear child, I don’t quite understand you. Have you taken any dislike to Lord Trevor, or do you know anything against him, any reason why he should not be asked here ?”

Quickly the answer came, though Ida's crimson cheeks belied her words.

"Oh, no, no, I know nothing—there is no reason ; pray ask him, Lady Atherstone—*pray* do ; I think it would be a very good thing." And she escaped into the hall, leaving her ladyship more puzzled than she had ever been in her life before.

## CHAPTER III.

"Still harping on my daughter."—HAMLET.

Two days after the events recorded in the last chapter, Lady Atherstone contrived to persuade Sir Henry to allow her to write and invite Lord Trevor to stay for a fortnight at the Grange. The letter was brought to him as he sat in the reading-room of his hotel at Brighton, and recognizing the handwriting, he took it out with him to read quietly on the beach, for, after all, he had not been able to persuade himself to leave Brighton.

By constantly dwelling on one idea, his mind was rapidly becoming morbidly sensitive and egotistical, he forgot his friends,



his duties in life, his own home ties, and remained on week after week by the sea, unable to force himself away from a place so identified with his unhappy attachment, and equally unable, on the other hand, to decide on visiting Daylesford as he had at one time purposed, and so voluntarily run the risk of constantly meeting Ida Atherstone.

Conflicting emotions and melancholy evil thoughts were doing their work slowly but surely on his once clear, vigorous mind, but yet there remained so much of good resolute purpose in him, that his first impulse on reading Lady Atherstone's kind invitation, was to tear the letter in pieces, and write a prompt and decided refusal. It has been truly said that a very miserable man is seldom a very bad man. Misery is produced by conflicting passions; when a man gives himself entirely over to evil influences, conflict ceases, and a calm sets in; a calm indeed fatal, delusive, and liable to be suddenly broken up at any moment, but still for the time a calm.

Lord Trevor was not a hardened sinner ; far from it : had he been so, he would only have chuckled over his good luck, and written at once to accept an invitation which coincided so entirely with his secret inclinations. Alas ! though the battle *was* fought, the victory was not gained.

The blue rippling sea, the sunny sky, the wet, rough, shingly beach, all faded away from before his eyes, and in their place he saw only a fair face, surrounded by waves of golden hair, and heard a sweet voice saying, "It is not very complimentary to me, Lord Trevor, you always seem *bored* in my society."

"She is so very sensitive and easily mortified," he murmured to himself ; "I know she would feel hurt, surprised, if I refused. Besides, I have no excuse to give ; she knows I had thought of going to Daylesford for the hunting."

By the time he had walked up to his hotel his mind was made up, and he had even succeeded in working himself into a kind of righteous indignation on the subject.

“What is all this ridiculous nonsense?” he muttered angrily, half aloud. “I am not a boy or a weak idiotic fool to be influenced by any woman, though she were the loveliest creature this world ever saw. I am going down to Arling for the hunting and to cheer up my friend, at his mother’s earnest request. What is Arthur’s wife to me? It would be unworthy, unmanly, childish, to turn my back on so evident a duty, just because I see that a temptation may possibly be involved in it!” Aye, if it is unworthy to act the part of an honourable Christian gentleman, unmanly to turn the back steadfastly on a seductive temptation, childish to cast away a glittering serpent because of the poison concealed in its shining folds.

But Lord Trevor had wilfully suffered his naturally clear judgment to become obscured, and the good angel, repulsed, spread his fair wings and soared away, leaving him to a more utter darkness, a more hopeless desolation.

The next day’s early post brought his

acceptance of Lady Atherstone's invitation to Arling Grange. It was a bright morning in early spring. Arthur and Ida were standing together on the little terrace when the note was brought to them by a servant, opened, and lying on a silver salver.

"So Trevor comes!" was Arthur's exclamation as he glanced rapidly over the letter.

Ida made no reply, but stooped down to gather an early violet, partly also to hide the rush of colour that instantly suffused her fair cheeks.

"I am afraid you don't much like it, dear," continued Arthur, a little surprised at her silence. "Well, between ourselves, it is rather a bore. I would rather have had my little wife to myself for a short time longer; we shall have quite enough company when we go to London."

"Why did you not say so to your mother, Arthur?"

"Well, she had set her heart upon it, and thought I should like it so much, I did not like to disappoint her. We

must make the best of it now he is coming."

"Oh! yes; I dare say he will amuse himself very well. There is the hunting."

"Unfortunately, that is nearly over now, but we may get a run or two yet. You must talk to Trevor, Ida, and try to amuse him. I don't know how it is, he always seems to me to be rather shy of you."

"He is so——strange in his manner sometimes."

"I dare say he does not understand ladies very well, especially very young ladies. But you will like him when you come to know him better: he is the best-hearted fellow in the world. Where are you going, Ida—down to the Rectory?"

"Yes; will you come?"

"No, I must go to my father. Go round by the road, dear; the garden is too wet for you."

He stood watching her till the light form disappeared through the gate, and then turned and went into the house.

Mr. Helmore continued much in the same

state, for although he had completely recovered his reasoning powers, his weakness was such that he was unable to leave his bed, and it was a great and exhausting exertion to him even to utter a short sentence. Life was slipping away very peacefully from the good old man ; he was quite aware that his recovery was improbable, and he seemed well content that it should be so.

The season was now unusually mild, and part of the day he would have his bed moved near the window, which was sometimes raised for a few minutes that he might catch a glimpse of the grey old church tower, and inhale the fragrance of a bed of violets just beneath. His even placidity of temper never varied, and he seemed to suffer no pain, only the lamp of life gradually grew dimmer as his physical strength daily and perceptibly diminished. He was much happier in all these respects than Sir Henry, for it now became evident that the baronet's bodily strength would outlast his mental faculties, and some dim consciousness of this made him at times irritable and

suspicious in his manner even towards Arthur.

On the morning of which we have been speaking, Ida found Elizabeth engaged in reading the Psalms to her father, so she waited till the gentle voice had ceased, and then came forward into the room.

The invalid's dim blue eyes turned towards her with a look of loving recognition, but he did not speak.

"I will leave you for a short time, dear," whispered Elizabeth. "Don't stay very long, for I think he is a little tired."

She left the room, and Ida knelt down by the bedside, and kissed the worn old hand that had done so much good work, and that would so shortly be at rest for ever. Lovingly the sunbeams came in and rested on her golden head, and the grey locks that mingled with her shining curls.

"My pretty child," the old man murmured, "you are very like your mother. May you be happier than she was!"

He did not speak again, though she waited for some minutes. His eyes were

closed, and, fearing to disturb him, she left the room and went down to Elizabeth. She was working in the drawing-room, and looked up in surprise as Ida entered.

"Have you left him so soon, dear?"

"Yes, he seemed so tired. Elizabeth, we are going to have a visitor at the Grange."

She was standing by the window, looking out at the familiar sunny landscape, and her voice sounded abrupt] and strange to her sister, though her face was turned away.

"Indeed, dear, who is it to be?"

"Lord Trevor; you have heard me speak of him."

"Oh! yes; the man you met at Brighton, and who had such peculiar manners, you told me."

Elizabeth spoke innocently enough, but Ida turned round with flushed cheeks, and spoke sharply, almost passionately—

"*Peculiar manners*, Elizabeth! What can you mean? I never said so. How you do imagine things!"



"Never mind, dear; I dare say it was my mistake," replied Elizabeth, quietly.

"Well, don't repeat it to any one else; it would sound so odd, such a strange thing for a lady to say of a gentleman.

"Indeed I will not."

Silence for a few minutes, during which Ida drummed impatiently on the window-pane with her fingers, and Elizabeth gazed thoughtfully into the fire. Steps outside on the gravel path.

"Why, here is Mr. Norman again, I declare. How that man does haunt the place," exclaimed Ida.

"He comes most days to inquire for papa," replied Elizabeth.

"Oh, nonsense! that is what you always used to tell me about Arthur. How good-looking he is, Elizabeth; such a thorough gentleman; you might search Sussex through, and not find anyone nicer or better suited to you."

This sort of conversation was always peculiarly disagreeable to Elizabeth, and she was quite relieved when it was put a

stop to by the curate's entrance. He shook hands kindly with both the sisters, but turned instinctively to Elizabeth for news of her father.

She gave the usual report, "Much the same—a very quiet night;" and then they began to talk of parish matters, and Ida wisely left them together, with a farewell meaning glance at Elizabeth, which she resolutely refused to see.

In the lane Mrs. Atherstone came upon Mrs. Fletcher, who was driving up to the Rectory, but instantly got out of her carriage and turned back with her young friend.

"I am so glad to have met you, dear," she began, "how is the poor dear Rector?"

"Much the same; there is no great difference from day to day, except that he grows weaker."

"Dear, dear, me, what a sad thing it is! Such a sudden break-up. My dear Ida, excuse me for mentioning it, you know one must speak of these things, do you know if Elizabeth has made any plans for the

future? Has she any idea what she will do with herself hereafter, when your dear father is taken to his rest?"

"Indeed, I have not the slightest idea; she does not like me to speak of it."

"Ah, very natural, very natural indeed, but some one must think of her, poor girl. I fear she will not have much to live on."

"No, indeed, I do not think there can be more than fifty pounds a year."

"Dear, dear, me!" exclaimed the good lady aghast; "what a sad thing it will be, scarcely enough to keep body and soul together. Oh, Ida! if she could only be induced to give that young curate a *little* encouragement (I am convinced that is all that is required to bring them happily together) what a providential event it would be! I must say, that it is very short-sighted of her, poor dear girl, she treats him just as if he was some reverend old father confessor. She will make the young man unbearably conceited in time, if her conduct has not had that effect already."

"Yes, I fully expect to see her kissing his hand some day, or going on one knee to implore his blessing," said the younger lady, with her light merry laugh. "Seriously, however, Mrs. Fletcher, you need not be alarmed as to Elizabeth's future prospects. Of course she will find a home with us."

"You have got to find a home for yourselves first."

"Oh, Arthur has half-promised to take a house in London before the season commences. By-the-bye, Mrs. Fletcher, we expect your friend, Lord Trevor, to stay with us to-morrow——"

"Do you indeed? I am glad to hear that; he is one of my very particular favourites."

"Is he?"

"Yes, I know no one out of my own family that I like so much, he is such a good-hearted young fellow, and so very amusing and lively."

"My dear Mrs. Fletcher, you amaze me. We met him at Brighton, and I found him

particularly quiet, almost melancholy. I assure you I thought he must have some secret care on his mind."

"He must have altered very much then in a few months. I remember he admired you immensely, Ida, more than any girl he ever met in his life (so he said). I hope your 'beaux yeux' have not been depressing the spirits of my young friend. My dear child, don't colour up in that way, I meant nothing."

"Will you excuse me, Mrs. Fletcher? I think I see Lady Atherstone in the garden, I will run on and join her. Good-bye," and in another moment she had vanished into the Grange shrubberies.

"Too touchy by half," soliloquized Mrs. Fletcher, as she looked after the retreating figure in amazement; "I wonder if there has been anything——no, Launcelot Trevor is not that sort of man. I would trust him to take one of my own daughters round the world. He is an honourable, true-hearted friend, if one ever existed

yet." And she turned and went back to the Rectory.

The next day was that fixed for Lord Trevor's arrival. In the morning came a note from Lady Laura to Ida, ostensibly to ask for a subscription to some Brighton charity, but the cream of the letter was contained in the postscript, which satirists say is very commonly the case with ladies' effusions. It consisted only of two lines,

"So you have asked Lord Trevor to the Grange, and he has accepted; you shocking little flirt, do you mean never to rest satisfied till you have broken his heart."

Now if Ida had been a sensible girl, she would have tossed the letter over to Arthur with a laugh, and he would have thought nothing of the matter. Instead of which she grew as crimson as the camellia bud in her dress, hesitated, half tore the note across, and finally handed it to her husband, saying, awkwardly, that it was not worth reading, and that Lady Laura was a stupid impertinent woman. Under these circumstances of course Arthur *did* read it, and

very attentively too, but his trust in his young wife was as yet so perfect that he only said quietly that Ida was right, and that no lady should condescend to write vulgar nonsense of that sort.

All that morning Ida felt nervous and restless, fifty times she regretted that she had not entreated Arthur to prevent Lord Trevor being invited, and then she would change her mind and begin to long for his arrival with feverish impatience. Even Lady Atherstone noticed her flushed cheeks and strange excitable manner, and fearing she was unwell, recommended her to go and lie down quietly in her own room. No advice could have been more acceptable, and Ida went upstairs, and did not appear again in the drawing-room till the luncheon-bell rang, and she was compelled to show herself. Luncheon well over, she was about to go into retreat again, but Arthur stopped her on the stairs.

"What is the matter, dear?" he said gently, "are you not well?"

"Oh yes, pretty well, I—my head aches a little, that is all."

"Come and have a walk, it will do you good. It is a glorious afternoon."

"Oh no, thanks, I had rather not, you know—perhaps, we might meet *him*."

"Who?"

No answer, except that which was conveyed in her crimsoned cheek and averted eyes. Arthur looked at her steadily for a moment, and then he said, half-laughing, half-annoyed,

"I do believe you are making yourself so nervous and wretched over the post-script in that idiotic Lady Laura's letter. Ida, Ida, don't be such a little goose. Why, my darling (and his voice changed to a more loving tone), do you think any living soul would be able to shake my confidence in you for one moment? I would trust you to go to the world's end with all the handsome Guardsmen in existence, and as for Trevor!—why I believe he would sacrifice his life any day if it could do me any good. He is everything that is honourable and



upright in himself, and my best friend besides. Lady Laura should have fixed on some more likely person to have a flirtation with *you*."

He looked so young, and handsome, and trusting, as he stood there on the staircase, the light from the painted window above streaming full on his fair open brow and sunny hair, his honest blue eyes looking straight into hers, that Ida's reserve nearly gave way. The remembrance of that scene in the railway carriage, momentary as it had been, came before her eyes. Again she saw the dark mournful eyes and heard the impassioned agonized words,

"Oh, Ida, Ida, you are *too* cruel!"

She turned away her head and burst into tears. In a moment Arthur's arm was thrown round her, and he had led her into a little room on the landing. There, with her fair head leaning on his shoulder, her hand tenderly clasped in his, in another moment all her foolish secret had been told, and this tale would never have been written. But just then wheels were heard outside, a

well-known voice was heard in the hall, a well-known step on the stairs. Ida started from her safe shelter, and Arthur stepped quickly out on the landing. The opportunity was gone, Lord Trevor had arrived.

## CHAPTER IV.

"A hunting we will go."—OLD SONG.

"A GLORIOUS morning, Trevor! What do you say to a day with the harriers?"

"I should like it immensely. By the bye, has my horse arrived? I heard nothing of him last night."

"Oh, yes; Black Prince has had every attention paid him, and will be as fresh as lark this morning. That is a horse worth seeing, Ida. You must come round to the stables before we start."

"Could I not go with you?" she asked, wistfully. "I should like it so much."

"My dear child, how can you go after the hounds?" exclaimed Lady Atherstone in horror.

"Of course she would only go to see the meet," replied Arthur. "I don't know why you should not go, dear; Roberts can go with us, and ride home with you when they throw off."

Ida did not look as perfectly satisfied as he expected, but the matter was so arranged, and at ten o'clock they were to start.

"The meet is at Bevin's Hollow," said Arthur, in reply to a remark of Lord Trevor's as to the lateness of the hour: "we shall get there in half an hour—a good level road all the way."

"It must be close to the place where we had that unlucky upset with Dobbin," said Ida.

They were just leaving the breakfast-room, but Arthur found opportunity to whisper a word in his wife's ear, expressing *his* opinion as to the misfortune which had been a principal means of promoting their intimacy in those early days of their acquaintance. Most young wives would have felt a thrill of delight at such lover-like expressions from a husband after three months

of wedded life, but no happy flush rose to Ida's cheeks.

"Don't be a goose, Arthur," was her sentimental rejoinder, as she sprang up the broad staircase; "and whatsoever you do, don't forget to tell Roberts to put a strong curb on Brownie."

And before Arthur could reply she had vanished, and he heard her voice from the regions above singing an old hunting-song, the refrain of which was not exactly suited to a young lady who was about to take a quiet ride along a turnpike road—

"Arise ! the burden of their song,  
This day the stag must die."

Punctually at ten o'clock the party assembled in the hall, and surely three more distinguished-looking individuals seldom set forth to grace the hunting-field. Never had Ida looked lovelier than she did this morning—the dark cloth habit fitting so closely to her perfect little figure, the golden hair laid away in glossy plaits under her hat, her bright eyes sparkling with excitement

and pleasure, and a crimson flush on her fair cheeks. Lord Trevor's fine figure and dark, melancholy countenance also showed to advantage in his perfectly-appointed, though sober, riding-costume; and Arthur's fair, handsome face looked happier and younger than it had done for many a long day.

The horses, too, were well worthy of their riders. Lord Trevor's Black Prince was a noble-looking animal, not in his first youth now, but a magnificent horse still, his proud arched neck and wide crimson nostril telling of a spirit still unsubdued, and a temper which not every horseman in England could safely encounter. Arthur was going to ride a young grey mare, yclept Wild Rose, a pretty creature with a wild, nervous eye, "as fresh as paint," as Roberts the groom observed, with genuine and truthful admiration. Ida's steed, The Brownie, was scarcely higher than a pony, but well up to her light weight—a handsome little animal, with a skin just the colour of the inner rind of a chestnut.

As the party mounted, even old Sir

Henry came to the window to watch them, his dim blue eye kindling with something of its old fire as his glance fell on Arthur, and he muttered, "They used to say I had the best seat in the county, and the boy sits as well, quite as well." But the momentary spark of intelligence soon died out again, and he turned away with a weary sigh, and began to scold his valet for delaying to bring up his breakfast till the *cortége* had started.

What a glorious morning it was!—one of those exquisite days which are common enough, thank God! in our early English spring. The hoar frost glittered on every leaf and blade of grass, throwing a mantle of radiant beauty over the meanest, commonest things; the air was fresh, but not too cold, while overhead the sun shone with almost April brilliancy, and in that transparent atmosphere

"Warbled around a busy crowd  
Of larks in purest air."

Ida's spirits rose higher and higher,

though at first they had been a little damped by finding that her unreasonable order about The Brownie's curb had not been attended to. Even Lord Trevor seemed to shake off the despondency which had now become habitual to him, and the sound of their merry voices and laughter rang out cheerfully through the frosty air.

At last they reached the scene of action, and a pretty sight it was. Doubtless the brilliant pink, which is the predominating colour in a meet of the foxhounds, would have been missed terribly by an artistic eye on this occasion ; but there were happy, rosy faces here, excellent riders of both sexes, several magnificent horses, and a pack of harriers which were celebrated throughout all the southern counties.

Old Squire Fletcher, the master, a red-faced, burly, happy-looking man, much resembling the ideal John Bull in *Punch*, rode about the field, cracking his whip, swearing and joking indiscriminately, and addressing his most seductive compliments especially to Ida, who was, as he had



affirmed to a friend at a dinner the night before, "One of the nicest-looking young women in Sussex, sir—an ornament to the county, by Jove! Should be proud to see her after my harriers any day in the season."

An unfortunate accident happened just as Arthur was calming Wild Rose's exuberant spirits by a gentle canter to the other side of the Hollow with Ida. The mare gave a sudden strain—there was a stumble, a snap, and he hastily dismounted, with an expression of impatience.

"This horrid girth has given way," he exclaimed. "How very careless of Roberts! I see it has been mended. I must ride back to the village. If the hounds find directly, as they always do here, I shall be out of it altogether."

"Let Roberts go for you, and take his horse."

"No, he will be wanted to ride home with you. Go back to Trevor, dear, and keep the Brownie well in hand, he pulls

this morning." And in another moment he was gone.

There was something like a look of relief on Ida's face as she rode slowly back, not to her own party, but to the edge of a little copse near at hand, from which she could watch the proceedings without being observed.

Lord Trevor had seen Arthur riding slowly down the hilly road toward the village, and concluded at once that he had changed his mind, and intended to return home with his wife. Not, perhaps, displeased at finding himself alone and independent, he rode up the gentle incline of the down, whither the harriers were now wending their way.

Suddenly there was an abrupt pause of the whole field, then a shout, a rush, and that low music began, inane enough to unprofessional ears, but the most enchanting sound on earth to hunting young Englishmen. In that moment of excitement Lord Trevor seemed to throw aside all his cares and troubles, his eyes glistened, his pale

cheek flushed, he became heart and soul a hunter, his one object in life, the hope of speedily ending the earthly career of that frightened, trembling little mass of soft fur, that is scudding along so rapidly as to be scarcely perceptible on the short, green turf. On, on, up the hill, down again into a level valley, over a tiny brook, up the steep again, who is this that is riding so closely by his side, her valiant little horse making desperate efforts to keep up with the long stride of his noble companion? Glancing quickly down, Lord Trevor uttered an exclamation of surprise and horror, for there was The Brownie, his glossy neck streaked with foam, while his fair mistress sat steady and upright as a dart, though her smooth plaits were all tossed and dishevelled, and her breath came thick and fast with the unwonted exertion.

"Mrs. Atherstone, *you* here!" almost gasped Lord Trevor; "I thought Arthur——"

"Oh, it's all right," she interrupted, gaily.

"He gave you leave?"

"Oh, of course, of course. How this little wretch is pulling, I can hardly hold him in."

At any other time his lordship might have paused to demand some explanation of this strange circumstance, but *now*, with that maddening music still in his ears, the temptation to follow became too strong. He said nothing, but quietly laid his hand on The Brownie's reins, and guided his reckless course up the steep, slippery down. On, on again. This hare is giving good sport; the gallant little animal is straining up the hill still, and some of the more showy horses are beginning to lag behind, but still The Brownie struggles on, though his sides are heaving painfully, and there is a wild, strained look in his eager eyes. His young mistress, too, is beginning to tire, the bright carmine tinting is leaving her fair cheeks fast, and her nerveless fingers scarcely close on the bridle. Well, they are not much needed, there is no fear of the Brownie pulling now. At the sum-

mit of the hill a broad, almost level, plain stretched before them, divided by a shaggy little hedge, not more than four feet high. Lord Trevor glanced doubtfully at his companion.

"You are tired, Mrs. Atherstone ; have you not had enough of it ?"

But she only shakes her head gaily as she replies—

"I *must* go on now ; we have distanced the whole field. Give me a lead here, will you ?"

Seeing her so determined, and apparently so brave, he dashed forward, and the Black Prince flew like a bird over the obstacle in his way, a very insignificant one to *him*. On galloped The Brownie, and rose gallantly to the leap, but, alas ! at the critical moment his mistress's courage forsook her, and she pulled the rein sharply. No experienced rider need be told the result. There was a sharp cry, a dull, heavy thud on the turf, and when Lord Trevor looked round, he saw the horse's hoofs battling with air, and a heap of dark cloth lying motionless

by his side. In a moment he had dismounted, and kneeling on the turf, raised the light form in his arms, and gazed with an awful anxiety into the white, lovely face, calling wildly to her to speak, to look up, to tell him that she was alive. There was no answer, no movement. He raised his head, and looked round anxiously to see if any of the field were in sight. No—yes; who is this riding up the hill as unconcernedly as if it were but a hillock in the garden? Surely that must be “Wild Rose,” few other horses could do what she is doing now; but Sussex born and bred as she is, she breasts the steep down as bravely and easily as if she had no weight on her back, and was only intent on reaching the top for her own gratification.

Yes, it is Arthur; he has seen the little group above, and presses forward so fast that Lord Trevor had hardly recognized him before he had gained the spot, and relieved him of his inanimate burden. No, not quite inanimate now, for her breath is

coming in short painful gasps, and the colour is slowly returning to her cheeks.

"What have you been doing? How could you let her ride?" asked Arthur, indignantly, looking up into the white, agonized face of his friend.

"I was very wrong, very careless, but she said you gave her leave. Oh, Arthur, why did you not keep with us?"

He made no reply, but bending again over his wife, strove to stanch the blood that was now flowing fast from a cut in her forehead, just underneath the fair waved hair. No one heeded The Brownie; he had struggled to his feet alone, and now stood perfectly still, looking down at his mistress with a kind of sorrowful reproach in his great, dark eyes, as if he would have said, "I am very sorry, but you know I could not help it."

A few more anxious moments, and then Ida wholly revived, and sat up, supported by Arthur's arm.

"It was very stupid of me," she said faintly, "I pulled his rein, and you have so

often told me not to do that. Don't look so miserable, Lord Trevor, I am not——"

"There, my darling, don't try to talk," interrupted Arthur hastily; "just lie still, and recover yourself. There is a cottage just below that hollow, Trevor, will you ride down, and see if they can send up a cart or something, as far as the road? I can easily carry her that way."

Off rode Lord Trevor, and happily succeeded in his mission. In a quarter of an hour's time, Ida was safely placed in a rough sort of pony chaise, belonging to the farmer, and made as comfortable as possible with shawls and pillows, the horses were left in charge at the farm, and the party moved slowly towards home.

As no serious damage seemed to be done, Arthur begged Lord Trevor to ride on with the hunt, but the request seemed almost sarcastically unkind to him. Just at that moment he felt as if he should never care to look on horse or hound again.

By their agency that golden head had been nearly laid in the dust, never to rise



again. No, he would hunt no more that day, he nearly made a vow never to hunt again. So the cavalcade wound slowly along the rough, steep road, and happily arrived at the Grange while Lady Atherstone was tending her flowers in the conservatory, so she was spared a sight which would have given her a terrible shock.

Once safely on the sofa in the solitude of her own darkened room, Ida soon revived. She had sustained no real injury beyond the shock and the cut on her forehead, which Arthur himself bound up tenderly, and then left her to enjoy a little repose. The young lady, however, soon tired of this, and sent again for Arthur, who, like the kind attentive husband that he was, sat down by her side and read aloud the "Lays of the Scotch Cavaliers," till twilight crept on, and she fell asleep.

About five o'clock Elizabeth came to look at her, and brought a favourable report of Mr. Helmore, and soon after that she dressed and came downstairs. Lord Trevor was alone in the drawing-room

when she came in, looking almost like a child in her square cut black dress, with jet ornaments, the white bandage on her forehead almost hidden by the clustering golden hair. She was startled to see how anxious and worn he looked, yet his first words were cold and conventional enough.

"I am glad to see you downstairs, Mrs. Atherstone, I hope you are feeling better."

"Thanks, I feel rather as if I had been put in a barrel and rolled down a hill. I never had such a shaking in my life, but I declare I look better now than you do."

"Oh, I am very well, thank you, only a little—tired."

Tired! that strong athletic young man, who had often ridden fifty miles a day, wearied out half a dozen horses, and been none the worse for it after all! The transparent excuse did not deceive Ida. She looked up at him with her sunny blue eyes, eyes which he steadily refused to meet. "I am afraid you have been a little anxious about me, Lord Trevor, indeed I ought to apologize to you for telling that

awful fib about Arthur's having given me leave. It was very wrong, but—somehow, when I heard the hounds in full cry, and saw the whole field galloping, I felt as if I *must* go on, if I knew I should meet with my death the next minute."

"I can understand that feeling," he answered smiling; "I must have felt something of it myself, or I should never have let you come on with me so far. Why, you have not ridden more than a dozen times in your life, have you?"

"Yesterday will be the eleventh time I have ever been on a horse," she answered demurely.

"Then you did wonders. I never saw a lady ride better, till we came to that unlucky hedge."

"Well, it is for the last time," she said with a sigh; "Arthur will never let me follow again, and if he would, Lady Atherstone would not. She is perfectly horrified at my exploits."

"Arthur is quite right. Your life is too precious to be risked in a hunting-field."

"Did you feel much frightened when you saw me tumble off?"

"Don't ask me," he replied hurriedly. "Let me forget it now I see you alive and well again. I do not think" (here he steadied his voice, and tried to speak slowly and indifferently)—"I do not think I could have felt more culpable if I had been persuading you to ride against your husband's orders."

"Orders, what a disagreeable peremptory word. Oh, Lord Trevor, what a fearfully despotic husband *you* will make some day!"

He was standing by the window, looking out into the garden, and he did not turn round as he answered,

"It is not likely that you will ever see that day. I shall never try to induce any lady to endure me as a husband."

"That is just the nonsense all men talk, Arthur has told me he used to say just the same before he married me. Why, Lord Trevor, you are young, and rich, and titled, it would not be difficult to find a wife for you."

"Perhaps not, for the sake of those inducements," was the bitter reply, "but I am rather peculiar in my views on that subject. I have a sort of fancy that I should like to be married for my own sake. Absurd conceit, isn't it?"

"I do not see that; many people would think you much more fascinating than Arthur."

It was a foolish speech, injudicious to the last degree. He shot a keen glance at her, but had not time to reply, before the door opened, and Lady Atherstone entered, a little more grave and stately than usual, in her sweeping black *moiré*.

"I hope you are feeling better, Ida," she said, more coldly than she had ever yet spoken to her daughter-in-law. "I dare say it will take you a few days to get over this foolish adventure."

"Dear Lady Atherstone, don't please look so grave," pleaded Ida, looking up with her loving smile, "I know I was very wrong, but I will never do it again, and

you must own that I have been punished. I shall not lose this scar for weeks."

Few could resist her (as she well knew) when she spoke in that half-penitent half-coaxing tone, certainly not gentle Lady Atherstone. She bent down at once and kissed the fair cheek, saying indulgently,

"Well, you are but a child, Ida; we must excuse some little indiscretions at your age. Only don't run such risks again, there's a dear girl."

So the matter passed off, and Arthur wisely forbore to inquire into the particulars of the unquestionable falsehood his wife had told Lord Trevor.

After dinner, Lady Atherstone sat down to her accustomed game at chess, Ida went to the piano, and played some of Mendelssohn's Lieders, very sweetly, if not very correctly, and Lord Trevor buried himself in the trenchant pages of the *Saturday Review*. About nine o'clock Arthur looked up, and thinking the party looked rather bored, said to his wife,

"You have not taken Trevor into the

conservatories, dear. Why should you not go round now, the gas is lighted?"

"I shall be very glad if Lord Trevor would like it," replied Ida briskly, closing the piano. "I might cut a few more camelias for those specimen glasses."

Of course Lord Trevor professed to be delighted, but he rose with a certain reluctance from his seat, which did not escape the eye of his fair escort.

She turned round as they reached the glass door leading from the drawing-room to the conservatory, and looked laughingly into his face.

"You look like a martyr going to the stake. I am afraid your lordship is most terribly *bored*."

"The old accusation," he said, smiling. "It is unfortunate that I cannot give my countenance a more pleasing expression. You would not believe any protestations, so I shall make none. 'Go on, I'll follow thee.'"

He spoke with a forced assumption of gaiety and unconcern which would not have

deceived a child ; but Ida only laughed, and they walked on side by side through the spacious hothouses, lighted at rare intervals with a jet of gas.

The Arling conservatories were celebrated through all the county : it was the one extravagance in which Lady Atherstone indulged, for she was otherwise a woman of remarkably simple tastes. The most costly exotics, the rarest and most delicate ferns, were here displayed with royal profusion. In all the long years during which the Grange had been uninhabited by its mistress, the gardeners had faithfully fulfilled the duties for which they were liberally paid, and never had the plants been in greater perfection than now.

“Are you fond of camellias?” asked Ida, pausing before a tree in magnificent bloom. “Lady Atherstone is so proud of these, but I think they are scentless, uninteresting things.”

“It is my favourite flower—perhaps for that very reason. I have a great dislike to strong scents, like the hyacinth and stephanotis.”



"Very well ; here is a lovely, half-opened bud for you. Let me get a tiny spray of maiden-hair fern. There, you could not wish for a prettier gentleman's bouquet."

"Thanks ; I never wear flowers in my coat, but I shall be happy to take them to my room. There are some empty specimen glasses there."

He spoke coldly, almost rudely, but Ida did not seem offended.

"These conservatories are like fairy-land," she remarked, after a moment's silence. "I often wish Lady Atherstone would sit here in the evening ; I am sure there is plenty of room."

"Does she play at chess *every* night ? It must be rather a bore for Arthur : he used to hate all those drawing-room games."

"I believe he hates them still, but he would do anything to please his mother, or indeed to please anybody."

"He is the most unselfish fellow."

"Yes ; it almost amounts to a fault in his character."

"A fault ?"

"Well, don't you know what I mean? He is so very ready to please everybody, that his good nature is often imposed upon."

"Yet there is no weakness in his character. Arthur can be firm enough when he feels it to be his duty."

"Really? Well, you know him better than I do. I should have said he might be persuaded to anything. For my part, I like a man to be more resolute, more decided, more—I don't quite know how to explain it, but I must say I think very angelic people are apt to be rather uninteresting."

"I hope you do not talk in this way to every one, Mrs. Atherstone; it might be misunderstood."

"Oh! no; I should not think of saying this, even to Elizabeth; but somehow I never feel any constraint with *you*. You know Arthur so well, and rate him so very highly."

"Not higher than he deserves."

"I suppose not."

Silence for a moment. Then Lord Trevor spoke earnestly, his dark cheek flushing the while, for the words did not come without effort.

“I sometimes fear, Mrs. Atherstone, that you scarcely appreciate Arthur as he deserves. You are mistaken in thinking extreme amiability a proof of weakness. I knew Arthur years before you were born. I have seen him marching for days under a burning sun on the sandy plains of India, encouraging all those around him by his brave, cheerful endurance of such hardships as you have never even dreamt of. I have seen him at the head of his company during the mutiny, leading them steadily on to what seemed almost certain failure and defeat. I have seen him face death in a more awful form, when our men were dying with cholera, and he was attacked himself. In all these circumstances, and in a hundred others almost equally trying, I have been by Arthur’s side, and I never knew him to flinch, or behave otherwise than as a brave Christian officer and gentleman.”

In so speaking of his friend, the dark cloud that lay between them seemed to vanish for an instant, and Lord Trevor's eye absolutely beamed with the affectionate admiration (almost amounting to veneration) in which he held Arthur. But his words awoke no answering enthusiasm in the breast of his companion.

"You men always stick up for one another," she laughed. "I never meant to dispute Arthur's bravery, I only wish he had a little more of your decision of character about ordinary matters. It is a great mistake to suppose women like to be given in to on all occasions. I feel sometimes as if I would give worlds if I could put him into a good thundering rage."

"That is never likely to happen, with *you*."

"Am I so very irresistible?" she smiled, glancing up into his grave face. "Well, I don't know; *you* never seem to find it impossible to say rude, unkind things to me."

"Mrs. Atherstone, do not say that. When have I ever——?"

“There, don’t get excited; you know I am telling the truth. You were very rude just now about that flower.”

He did not reply at once, and Ida glanced up into his dark, working face, and grew rather frightened.

“I did not mean to vex you,” she said, timidly; “but you are so easily offended.”

How he would have answered will never be known, for at that moment Lady Atherstone’s voice was heard calling them to prayers.

Lord Trevor hastily thrust the red camellia bud into his breast. Long years after, when that brave heart had crumbled into dust, the faded crimson leaves lay there still!

## CHAPTER V.

"My doom is, I love thee still."—TENNYSON.

NEXT day it poured with rain—cold, drizzling, hopeless rain. The Downs were blotted out, and the whole country was wrapped in a dense mist—weather most dispiriting to every one except the Grange gardener, who said it was "a fine growing morning, and would bring on the young plants first-rate."

Ida had gone early to the Rectory to see her father, and returned about eleven o'clock in a very bad humour, and wet through even in that short distance. She found Lady Atherstone seated in the drawing-room, happily engaged with her worsted-

work. Arthur was with his father, and Lord Trevor, having read every line of the *Times*, was commencing to study the advertisements, and looked excessively bored.

"My dear," said her ladyship, as Ida entered the room, "I have been trying to persuade Lord Trevor to take your likeness. He says he is out of practice, but he drew such a pretty picture of Mary from a photograph not long ago, and I think you would be an easy subject."

"Why?" asked Ida, looking much amused.

"Well, you have regular features and brilliant, picturesque colouring."

Ida looked much flattered, and glanced at Lord Trevor for corroboration of this pleasing statement, but his answer was not encouraging.

"You mistake, Lady Atherstone; regular features are easier to draw in themselves, but it is more difficult to make a good distinctive likeness of them. For example, Miss Helmore would make a better subject for a water-colour drawing

than Mrs. Atherstone, and any pretty little village-girl than Miss Helmore. It might not be difficult to draw a beautiful young lady with straight features and golden hair, but probably you would not think it a good likeness of Mrs. Atherstone. I do not know that I ever saw a more puzzling subject than she would be."

"Nevertheless, I wish you would try," replied Lady Atherstone.

The discussion continued for some time longer, but, as might have been expected, Lord Trevor allowed himself to be over-persuaded, and the drawing was commenced that very morning.

Poor Lady Atherstone! with the most innocent intentions she had committed a cruel indiscretion. Under existing circumstances nothing could be more unfortunate than for Lord Trevor to be compelled to sit for several hours each day in Ida's society, often quite alone, with a reasonable and even necessary excuse for gazing attentively into her beautiful face, till each graceful lineament seemed as indelibly burnt into



his heart as it was transferred immutably to the paper.

As he had foretold, she proved a difficult subject; and even when Arthur and Lady Atherstone were satisfied with the outline, the critical artist declared there was something incorrect, and recommenced the whole picture a dozen times. The attitude they had chosen for her was simplicity itself. She was depicted standing by her own little work-table, a few hothouse flowers strewn carelessly before her. She held one red camellia-bud in her hand, the brilliant colour standing out in contrast against her white dress, relieved here and there with knots of black ribbon. Her eyes were raised as if some one had just addressed her, her lips a little parted as if to speak. Round her fair neck there hung a jet necklace, and in the wavy hair there nestled a white camellia—a beautiful picture, so lovely in reality, that it seemed a hopeless task to transfer it to paper.

No wonder the artist grew enamoured of his work! No wonder that Ida—vain,

conscious child as she was—purposely lengthened out the hours of sitting, that she might have the “fun” of intercepting those stolen, adoring glances quickly exchanged for a cold, business-like scrutiny when he thought she noticed them.

The old, old story over again—a frivolous, heartless beautiful woman, meaning no harm, totally innocent of any wrong except that involved by utter thoughtlessness, and yet far more dangerous than a score of criminals whose names are held up to public execration! How often do we see the like in real life. A woman’s delicate hand loosens the bar that confines the mighty waters, only for fun, *only for fun!* and who so startled as she when at length they burst their bounds and flood the whole country, scattering devastation and death around. Ida’s hand is toying with the bar, the waters are rising and foaming about her, yet how calm and peaceful is all the world around!

Only a handsome, spacious drawing-room—a pretty girl standing to be drawn,

in a white dress, with a red camellia in her hand—an artist absorbed in his work, with bent head and earnest eye—an elderly lady peacefully knitting by the fireside. It is the picture of a happy English home; and so Arthur thinks when he looks in occasionally in the course of the morning; and his eyes rest so lovingly on his wife, with such friendly confidence on his friend.

Well, let us leave them for a time, and return to the Rectory. In this calm, hallowed ground all is peace and safety—no gathering storms lower in their blue sky; the stream of their life flows quietly by, doing its appointed work—useful, refreshing, and blest!

A few pages here transcribed from Elizabeth's diary will best describe the progress of events in Arling at this time.

*"February 27th.*—There has been no material change in my dear father for the last fortnight. He can sit in his favourite easy chair by the window in his room, and look out on the dear old familiar landscape, for so many years the scene of his happy

labours. Slowly, very slowly, his strength declines, but his sufferings are never acute, and his gentle, steadfast spirit never wavers or repines. No one now, not even the ever-sanguine Mrs. Fletcher, has the least hope of his ultimate recovery, excepting Ida; *she* still persists in hoping, and is quite angry with me if I try to prepare her mind for the inevitable stroke, which will, I fear, find her wholly unprepared. Poor child! she has had no experience of real sorrow, and she shrinks almost angrily from the very idea of such a thing.

“It seems scarcely natural to write or think of anything but this heavy anxiety which is now pressing on us; but there are other matters connected with Ida which are giving me uneasiness just now. Lord Trevor has been staying for some days at the Grange. He is a handsome man, tall, dark, and very distinguished-looking. Arthur is very much attached to him, and no wonder, for they were school friends and served in India together. Apart from the influence of early association, I cannot

conceive what Arthur can see to admire or esteem in Lord Trevor. To me he appears a silent, melancholy man, constantly saying sarcastic, bitter things. There is nothing youthful, fresh, or joyous about him. (How different from Arthur, with his cheerful, open face, and candid, winning smile!) Yet, in spite of all this, there is something about Lord Trevor which tells me that he has not always been thus—that his is a naturally genial disposition, soured, perhaps, by some heavy calamity—like ‘sweet bells jangled,’ all the harsher for the melody that *should* be there. Sometimes he will brighten up, and be quite a different man for a few minutes, natural and happy, then the cloud seems to roll over him again, and he will turn away with a heavy sigh, as though repenting that he had been deluded into enjoying himself.

“I do not see very much of him, but Ida occasionally brings him here to tea. He walks about with her a good deal, which is natural, perhaps, as Arthur is so much engaged with his father; but still I wonder

at Lady Atherstone liking it, she is generally so very particular about these little things. Moreover, she seems to share the general admiration and respect for her strange guest, and she is a better judge than I am."

"*February 29th.*—I am really vexed with Ida. She tells me that she is exerting all her influence with Arthur to induce him to take a house in London, and go up to town immediately after Easter. I do not think it is considerate or right to press him on such a subject, considering Sir Henry's health and our dear father's precarious state. I did all I could to induce her to put away the idea, at any rate till April, but she is wilful as ever, and only laughs at me for being such 'a ridiculous old fidget.'

"Any one but Lady Atherstone would be seriously displeased with her, but she—dear, unselfish soul as she is—says she will try and arrange that Ida's wishes shall be gratified if our father is pretty well, and if Sir Henry will consent to go to their

house in Portman Square when the weather is a little more settled—two ‘ifs’ which are not very likely to take place.

“Lord Trevor puzzles me more than ever. He watches Ida continually with the most extraordinary expression of countenance. I noticed it in church yesterday: it is not admiration, not dislike, not fear, but a strange combination of the three. Sometimes he speaks to her harshly, almost rudely, and she will flush up and look quite frightened; at other times there is a strange, yearning look in his eyes, which is more perplexing than anything else. Ida cannot bear me to talk to her about him, and the utmost I can get her to acknowledge is that he is very eccentric, and she wishes he would go away. I wish it, too, with all my heart.

“*March 1.*—This morning Mr. Norman preached a very rousing sermon, chiefly intended to rebuke the want of that ‘fear’ (of God and of the judgment day) which is the ‘beginning of wisdom.’ He seems to think a false feeling of security the great

fault of the present generation. My heart went with him in much that he said, but not in all. I cannot but think that the chief failing of the present age is not want of light, but want of love; we acknowledge God as our Creator and Judge, but are less ready to own him as our merciful and loving Father. I do not think our Lord wishes us to watch for (or rather *against*) his coming, as for some great and awful catastrophe, with blanched faces and beating hearts, such is not the tone of the Bible, nor of St. Peter's loving, glowing words, 'Looking to and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.' Fear may be appropriate to the hardened, unrepentant sinner, but surely God's little flock may look and long for His approach as a loving child watches for the return home of a father long absent, but never forgotten. This is the reason that I never can enter fully into the spirit of some of our Advent hymns, especially, 'Lo, He comes,' and 'Day of Wrath.' No, when our Lord does appear in glory, I do not think His people



will fall prostrate and trembling on their faces; His dear children will not need to hide their faces in dismay. Awful as that sight will doubtless be, I think one would rather look straight past the vast kneeling multitudes, past the ranks of angels, past even the great Rainbow that circles the Throne, straight up to where that Form will be standing, holy, gracious, and most beautiful, and there we shall find assurance and peace in the glance of that eye, the loving eye that recalled Peter, and wept over the tomb of Lazarus."

"*March 4th.*—Ida has gained her point. Lady Laura Marjoribanks happened to hear of a nice little house in Cadogan place belonging to a friend who was going abroad, and let her know of it, thinking it might suit them. Lady Atherstone, seeing Ida wished it so much, pressed Arthur to decide, and it was all settled in a few hours. To-morrow Arthur will go up to town to look at the house, and if it seems likely to suit them, it will be taken for six months, and they will leave Arling in ten days'

time. Sir Henry and Lady Atherstone will go up to their own house in Portman Square some time in May, if it is possible. Mr. Norman called this morning, and seemed quite amazed to hear that Ida is going away. He expressed his opinion of our father's state more definitely than he ever did before, and at parting said words which went straight to my heart, 'Your sister might put off her gaieties for a time, Miss Helmore, it will not be for *long*.' I feel that he is right, but I cannot convince Ida; she declares papa is looking much better, and that she believes the spring will entirely restore him to health. God grant it, but I doubt—I doubt."

"*March 9th.*—I am thankful to say that Lord Trevor has left. Lady Atherstone and Arthur both pressed him to stay, but he positively refused, pleading urgent and important business. I think better of him than I did before, for I am now certain that he is strongly attracted by Ida. It is a strange romance to occur in our peaceful little village, and I am sometimes surprised

that I am not more alarmed about it; but truly, I cannot imagine the man who would *not* be 'strongly attracted' by our Ida's wonderful beauty and winning, saucy ways, and I trust they have both too much self-respect to allow any foolish flirtation to begin. Ida is too fond of admiration, but she must remember that she is a married woman now, and has Arthur's dignity to preserve as well as her own. Well, his lordship is safe out of the way for the present, with his melancholy voice and entreating eyes—may it be long before they meet again. Lady Atherstone came in to tea this afternoon, looking sadly worn and worried. Poor thing, no one knows what she has to go through with Sir Henry, except, perhaps, Arthur. How thankful I should be for dear papa's sweet, placid disposition, which makes waiting on him rather a pleasure than a labour, and will, as the doctor thinks, actually lengthen his life. Mr. Norman is a great comfort to us. Although my time is so much taken up, nothing is neglected in the parish. He has

been working indefatigably during all this inclement weather, and the poor like him much. I trust he may keep well, but he looks thin and pale. Mrs. Fletcher thinks he wants a wife to take care of him, and keep him from working too hard. Perhaps he does, but I do not know where he will find one. He seems to avoid all young ladies, and gives great offence by visiting no one in the neighbourhood. We are on the pleasantest terms; if he were my brother he could not be kinder and more considerate in every way; and oh! the inexpressible comfort of having to deal with a man who is perfectly simple and sincere, and does not understand what flirtation means. The Grange party do not much like him; he is too haughty to suit Lady Atherstone and Arthur, and too reserved to please Ida. He is not one of those who cares for the world's opinion, but I do wish sometimes he would try to be a little less grave and a little more genial. He would have more influence."

"*March 14th.*—The blow has fallen at

last, and unexpectedly, as it always *does* fall. Our dear father entered peacefully into his rest yesterday afternoon. It was a lovely mild day, and a minute before I had been into his room to give him some early violets. When I returned he was lying back on his cushion in the dear old easy chair, his face perfectly calm and placid, but the pure spirit had returned to God, who gave it. The flowers had not fallen from his hand.

“The Atherstones left two days ago for London. I have no room for anger in my heart now, but I grieve to think of Ida’s self-reproach when she hears this news. Poor child! I am thankful to think that she, at least, has a happy home, and is well provided for. I have just been in again to look at the dear father. The majesty of death is on the calm face now, the lines of care and sorrow are smoothed away, and the restful, happy expression seems to forbid any noisy grief in that peaceful presence.

“ ‘See how calm he looks, and stately,  
Like a warrior on his shield,  
Waiting till the flush of morning  
Breaks along the battle-field.’

“The desolation and the sorrow will come soon; at present I can only feel thankful that our dear father is at rest for ever. No more weariness and suffering for him, but an eternal peace, and a glorious reward.”

## CHAPTER VI.

“‘God make thee good as thou art beautiful,’  
Said Arthur—”

TENNYSON.

FIVE days after the news had reached her of her father's death, Ida was sitting in the pretty little drawing-room in Cadogan Place, looking and feeling extremely unhappy. She had been living in a state of unnatural and unhealthy excitement for months, indeed ever since her marriage, and the weight of this great sorrow fell upon her unchastened spirit with almost crushing violence. She had wept and fretted herself till her bitter extravagant grief had made her quite ill, and the doctor strictly forbade her going down to the

funeral, which Elizabeth had much wished. Could she have analysed her own feelings, she would have discovered that natural grief for the loss of her dear father was not the principal, or even the primary cause of her distress.

Remorse and self-reproach,—remorse for her conduct towards Lord Trevor, and self-reproach for having left her father in his critical state,—these were the real sources of her misery at this time. With all her faults, Ida was not, as a rule, self-deceiving, and she fully realized that her conduct to her husband's friend had been heartless and cruel to the last degree. Those last few days of his visit at the Grange had effectually removed the veil from her eyes, it was no question *now* of an innocent flirtation, foolish perhaps, and not exactly suitable to a married lady, but quite harmless to both parties. No, Ida knew now that she was loved, loved with an absorbing, eager, overwhelming passion, such love as is not often given now-a-days, such love as she had only hitherto dreamt of in old



romances and poems. She knew too that Lord Trevor was naturally the very soul of honour, and that this terrible secret had never been betrayed if it had not been for her own wicked conduct (ay, she acknowledged that it *had* been wicked now) enticing him, and drawing him on to the very verge of a declaration which would have lowered him in his own eyes for ever, and even in hers.

Weak people are always miserable, and Ida was intensely weak. Even now, with the softening effects of a great sorrow upon her, when she had candidly acknowledged to herself that she had done very wrong, even *now*, she could not make up her mind to give up this dangerous game for ever. Perhaps she unconsciously entertained a higher opinion of Lord Trevor than she was aware of herself, and felt a secret confidence that he was in reality to be trusted as fully as Arthur himself. Had he not invented a most palpable excuse for leaving the Grange just when they were becoming really intimate? and her society

must have been more seductive than ever to him? Surely no harm could ever come of intercourse with one so self-restrained, so high-minded, so *really* good. Yet, oh! how unsatisfactory and transparent were all these specious arguments in reality, and in her better moments Ida knew that they were so. No wonder that her eyes lost their joyous innocent look, and became sad and heavy, that her cheeks lost their rosy bloom, and her gay spirits became variable and irritable.

Knowing nothing of her secret causes for inquietude, Arthur set down these changes to the anxiety and grief she was passing through, and was more than ever attentive and kind in his manner, pitying her most sincerely, and willing to do anything in the world which could please or enliven her.

On the morning of which we are speaking, he found Ida sitting by herself in the drawing-room, looking as sad and forlorn as anything it is possible to conceive, in spite of her elegantly furnished room, a

room which would have seemed a very paradise of luxurious comfort in the old days. Sitting down by her side, he took the cold little hand in his, saying,

"I think, dear, you should write to Elizabeth to-day, she ought not to be left in doubt for a moment as to her future home."

"Arthur, what do you mean? Must she come to live *here*, with us?"

It was his turn to look at her with surprise.

"What better arrangement could be made, Ida? where could the poor girl find a home, if not with us? Surely, surely, you would wish to have her."

Many thoughts flitted through Ida's mind at that moment, first the remembrance of her own words to Mrs. Fletcher, "of course Elizabeth would come to us," then the vision of the sweet tranquil countenance, and sober, dark-hued dress, almost nun-like in its simplicity, then Lord Trevor's grave handsome face—Ah, how would those two agree? What possibility could there

be of any intercourse with *him* if Elizabeth was to be always in the house, always watching her with those keen, yet soft eyes, so like her father's, always at hand to advise and exhort, perhaps even to play the spy upon her, and report her sayings and doings to Arthur. To be sure, all this was very unlike Elizabeth, but there was no knowing how she might act if she saw anything going on of which she, in her strait-laced propriety, might disapprove. Oh, it would be an intolerable gêne, a most worrying restraint. Arthur noticed the changes of expression passing over his wife's countenance, and scarcely knew whether to be most confounded or annoyed.

"I don't quite understand this, Ida," he said at last. "Have you any reason for wishing your sister not to come here?"

The colour rushed over her brow as she turned away her head, and replied hurriedly;

"No; no, Arthur, don't think that. Of course she must come here, there is no

help for it—I mean, I should like it very much. Will you write to her, please, I don't feel up to much this morning?"

"I will write, but I think just a line from you will please her. I will bring you my letter before it is sealed up."

"Very well."

Half an hour afterwards he brought in a sheet, containing a few lines of warm affectionate invitation to Elizabeth, to consider their house as her home, from that time forth. Ida waited till she was again alone, and then drawing a gold pencil from her pocket, wrote the following words on the same page :

"Of course you will come if you like, dear, let us know your plans as soon as possible. London is very dreary and disagreeable, but a few degrees better than Arling. Tell us when to meet you at the station.—IDA."

When Elizabeth received this letter, she was sitting in the lonely little Rectory drawing-room, her sweet face pale and worn with long weeping, though there was

a look of resignation and peace about her whole attitude, which showed that her great grief had only subdued, not crushed her. She had had one letter from Ida already, and was somewhat surprised when the black-edged envelope with the familiar delicate handwriting was placed in her hand. She read the few lines it contained slowly and deliberately, once, twice, and then quietly laid it down on the little table by her side, drew her desk towards her, and wrote her answer, with hasty, trembling fingers.

“DEAR ARTHUR AND IDA,

“I have just received your letters. Forgive me that I must decline your kind proposal. It will be better for me to have a home of my own, and be a burden on no one. I am not left destitute; I have enough to live on as a lady, quietly and comfortably, which is all I need.

“In a few days I will write more definitely about my plans. Very likely I shall make my home at Daylesford, where I have

many friends, and living is not expensive.

“Your loving

“ELIZABETH.”

She had just directed the envelope, when Lady Atherstone was announced, and she found herself enfolded in that kind lady's loving embrace.

“I see you have heard from Ida, dear Elizabeth—I think I know on what subject. Arthur wrote to me this morning. My dear child, you will find a happy home with them.”

Silently Elizabeth placed her answer in Lady Atherstone's hand. She read it with the greatest astonishment, and forthwith commenced to argue with the girl, always kindly, but still very decidedly, pointing out to her that she was acting foolishly and even wrongly in rejecting so natural and suitable an asylum.

In the midst of the discussion, or rather exhortation, for Elizabeth scarcely spoke, Mr. Norman came in, and Lady Atherstone

straightway appealed to him to support her arguments. He heard quietly what she had to say, and then glanced quickly at Elizabeth's white, averted face.

"I think," he said slowly, "that Miss Helmore prefers independence and a quiet life of usefulness to dependence and fashionable society. I agree with her—she will be happier living alone than with Mrs. Atherstone."

"Perhaps it is too soon to expect her to decide anything," said Lady Atherstone, kindly, glancing at Ida's letter, which she had not been asked to read. "Her sister is the best person to persuade her. Of course Ida intends to come to you at once, dear Elizabeth?"

"No; she is not well, and the doctor forbids her travelling. Arthur offers to come, but I would rather he did not give himself that trouble—it would be of no use."

"Ida not well! what is the matter? Arthur says nothing about it."

"Oh! I don't suppose it is of any conse-



quence ; she is naturally very excitable and sensitive. They are right to keep her as quiet as possible."

The expression of Mr. Norman's face during these last words was worth seeing. He considered that Mrs. Atherstone's conduct in not coming to her sister at once was heartless and cold in the extreme. True, she had lost a father, but Elizabeth had lost *everything* ; this bereavement left her utterly desolate and alone, homeless, all but penniless.

After a little more fruitless persuasion Lady Atherstone took her leave, and Elizabeth then confided her plans to the young clergyman — plans which she dared not mention before, and which indeed had only been formed within the last ten minutes. She intended to find some simple, inexpensive lodging in Daylesford, where she was so well known, and eke out her scanty income (about sixty pounds a year) by giving music lessons. She did not trouble herself with thinking if such a life would be suitable to the sister of the wealthy Mrs.

Atherstone ; it would not be an unpleasant or uncongenial one to herself. Hard work had always been a pleasure to her, and, with the touch of asceticism natural to her character, she even rejoiced that she would not be called upon to live a life of idle luxury. She was, however, wise enough to conceal her idea of becoming a teacher of music even from Lady Atherstone, and three days after her father's funeral quietly packed up her small possessions, bid a loving farewell to the dear old Rectory, and drove off to take up her final abode in a small lodging in the High Street, procured for her by the good offices of Mrs. Fletcher at a very moderate rent.

It must not be supposed that this step was taken without much opposition on the part of her relatives and friends. Lady Atherstone did not conceal the fact that she thought her independence proceeded from a foolish and over-sensitive pride ; Mrs. Fletcher told her that she would soon tire of the drudgery of teaching, and find too late that she had lowered her

position among the Daylesford gentry; and Arthur came down from London to argue, entreat, and command her to return to Cadogan Place with him.

All these efforts proved utterly fruitless. Gentle and yielding as Elizabeth was in ordinary matters, there was a considerable reserve fund of gentle obstinacy in her character; and to strengthen her resolution, the almost conventual life she had led all her early years had inspired her with a genuine, nervous horror of the fashionable world. Perhaps had it been clearly put before her that her presence in her sister's house at this time would be of real substantial use, she might have given way, for duty was ever paramount with Elizabeth; but this idea never occurred to her.

Her training had succeeded in making her perfectly simple and unworldly, but had not sharpened her naturally not very acute perceptions. She never thought of Lord Trevor as likely to exercise any unfortunate influence over Ida's mind, which

her presence might have prevented. If she ever remembered him at all, it was only as a disagreeable, mysterious acquaintance, who had now passed entirely out of their lives, and would probably never trouble them again.

So she quietly took up her abode in the humble little lodging in the High Street, uncheered by the approbation of any one of her friends, with the exception of Mr. Norman. It was a comfort to her that he intended to remain at Arling, as curate to the newly-appointed rector, Mr. Stanfield—a good man, and a High Churchman. They did not, of course, meet as frequently as heretofore, but with the almost childish disregard of the etiquette of society that was a distinguishing feature in both their characters. Mr. Norman frequently called on Elizabeth, and passed many a congenial and happy hour in her society, engaged in the discussion of those subjects which lay nearest to the hearts of both.

Mrs. Fletcher's indefatigable exertions procured one or two juvenile music

pupils, and Elizabeth seldom found her days solitary or long. She had many visitors, and managed always to preserve the affection and respect of her friends, in spite of what they termed, her "very odd ways."

Mrs. Fletcher had not altogether abandoned the idea that Mr. Norman might in time come so to appreciate the excellence of her young friend's character as to make her an offer of marriage; but as days and weeks passed on these hopes waned, and at last she steadily avoided any encounter with the young curate, for fear that the indignation boiling within her might find a vent in words.

So Elizabeth's days flowed on in a kind of mediæval calm, apparently living in the world, and dressing and speaking like other people, but in reality passing a life of almost as perfect seclusion as any abbess of the olden days. Gradually the many visitors, that had been attracted by interest or curiosity, dropped off, and at last whole weeks passed without her seeing a friend,

except Mr. Norman. Still she was very happy; and if sometimes she felt a little sore at Ida's neglect, her sweet face soon brightened again as she discovered some natural excuse for conduct which appeared strange and heartless to every one else.

Meanwhile, affairs in Cadogan Place were not progressing quite favourably. Already clouds were beginning to gather on the horizon of a domestic home which should have been as cheerful and loving as any in England. Gradually and reluctantly (*how* reluctantly none but God and himself ever knew) the conviction forced itself upon Arthur's mind that his young wife was not all that he had fondly hoped—that, after all, his first estimation of her character had come very near the truth. Ida was also to be pitied. She was excessively unhappy, and unhappiness is apt to make people unreasonable and ill-tempered.

The "uses of adversity" are "sweet" indeed when the trial comes straight from God, but it is not always so when sorrow

is brought upon us by our own wrong or foolish doing. Ida knew that she had not behaved kindly to Elizabeth, she knew that this and other similar actions had gone far to alienate her husband's respect, perhaps even his affection, and besides all this, the image of Lord Trevor was for ever coming between her and all innocent enjoyment.

Lady Laura Marjoribanks was in town, and, strange to say, Alda's companionship was the one bright spot in Ida's existence at this time. There is a period in a girl's life when she *must* worship something, youth's warm romantic feelings require this vent, well is it for them if the feeling is as innocent and pure as was Alda's for Ida Atherstone. She considered her friend absolutely perfect in every respect, her dress, her looks, her manners, all were infinitely superior to the rest of the world, and to be looked up to and copied accordingly.

Half-amused, half-flattered, Ida graciously allowed herself to be worshipped, and oc-

casionally made her adorer happy by some trifling present or attention, as much prized as a lover's gift in after years. In proportion as her daughter's affection for Ida increased, Lady Laura's diminished. Immediately after Lord Trevor's return to Brighton from Arling Grange, he had allowed himself, with a kind of weary desperation born of despair, to be drawn into a sort of flirtation with Alda; of course encouraged and abetted by her mother. As Lady Laura's hopes rose, her suspicions increased, and she became seized with a nervous apprehension, lest Ida's superior attractions should interfere with her daughter's prospects.

But we are anticipating. For about six weeks after the Atherstones came to town, Lord Trevor did not make his appearance. Rumour said that he was visiting about in the country, then he was heard of at Baden, but April was past and the park was green with May buds before Ida saw him again.

At this time the favourite diversion



among our young aristocracy was skating at Prince's Club. This institution has rapidly become excessively popular, and no wonder, for it combines much of the pleasures of a ball with the advantages of simple dress, and healthy and invigorating exercise in the open air. Imagine a long narrow expanse of asphalt, considerably widened at one end, and bordered by a green field on one side and an ivy-covered wall on the other. This is covered twice a day with enthusiastic skaters of both sexes, from quite elderly ladies and gentlemen to tiny children, looking picturesque and graceful with their flowing hair and piquant little costumes.

Here may be seen the handsomest girls of the handsomest nation in the world, and it may be observed that Prince's has this grand advantage over all other rinks, that members are elected by a very select committee, and that, therefore, city dames and doubtful members of society have no chance of admittance. Let the Radicals say what they will, so long as there is any

difference between a mongrel and a thorough-bred King Charles, so long will blue blood continue to make itself evident, and our old families (among whom we do not admit *all* the nobility) will carry the traces of their long and pure descent in their appearances.

There are many pretty dairy maids in England, and some of these have risen by fortunate marriages to hold distinguished places in society, and with woman's tact have learnt to demean themselves with grace and dignity in their new positions. But there are three points which mark a real lady, and which never can be mistaken or imitated, hands, voice, and glance of the eye. But many will disagree with us here, so we will not pursue the subject, save to remark that at Prince's Club the lover of our young English aristocracy can have his taste gratified to the utmost, and the artist might seek far to find lovelier faces and more graceful figures.

Owing to her deep mourning, Ida was prevented from entering into any gaieties,

but she often went to Prince's with Lady Laura or her husband, and sat for hours under the large shady umbrellas, thoroughly enjoying the gay scene and the fresh air. She was sitting in this pleasant place one sunny afternoon, watching Alda's diffident attempts on the rollers, when her eyes fell on a well-known face and form, issuing from the door leading to the tennis court. Her heart beat fast and her cheeks crimsoned, for it was Lord Trevor himself. He walked slowly down the rink, and soon caught sight of Ida. He raised his hat and passed on, but with an air of indecision very unusual in him; and before he had reached the end, the attraction of her presence was too much for him. He paused for a moment and spoke a few hasty words to a friend, so as to make an excuse for having passed her before, and then turned back, and joined Ida under the shade of the small tent. They talked together for a few minutes, formal uninteresting conversation not worth recording, and then the gentleman rose and left the club on

pretence of keeping an appointment, and the lady leant back in her chair, and looked after him with a laughing triumph in her blue eyes.

## CHAPTER VII.

"It was my duty to have loved the highest,  
It surely was my profit had I known,  
It would have been my pleasure had I seen."

TENNYSON.

A MOURNFUL change had come over Sir Henry Atherstone. A few weeks ago he could not bear to be without his son's companionship, even for a few hours, now he scarcely ever mentioned his name, and seemed perfectly content that he should remain away from Arling. The apathy of extreme old age was creeping over him, he was now, as a rule, tolerably calm and contented, but took very little interest in anything, a state of things which sorely tried his wife's loving heart. She still

wrote cheerfully to Arthur, holding out hopes of their being able to come up to town by the middle of June, but in her secret heart she often doubted whether the old squire would ever again leave the Grange. It was well that her loving deception spared Arthur much of the anxiety he must otherwise have undergone, for his state of mind at this time was anything but tranquil.

It has been truly said that *weak* persons do the greatest mischief in the world, and are more dangerous even than those who have given themselves up entirely to evil doings. Who would have accused Lord Trevor of being weak? His dark steady eye, firm mouth, and independent, almost imperious, manner, would have deceived any physiognomist into pronouncing him a man of strong and decided character. And so he was, on all points but *one*. He would have walked firmly up to the cannon's mouth with unshaken nerve and unchanged expression, he would even (far harder task) have braved any amount of

ridicule and contempt in defence of what he knew to be right.

Strange that a woman's soft hand had yet strength enough to draw him from the right path, a woman's blue eyes could shake a resolution which all the world might have tried to overthrow—in vain. Yet let us do him justice, though in secret he nursed his infatuation for Ida, in the world he treated her with marked distance and respect, in private (for they had frequent opportunities of meeting) his manner was the perfection of cold civility. But there are some secrets which the world may be trusted to find out sooner or later, and a misplaced attachment is one of them. Lord Trevor might control his words and his manner, but he could not control the expression of his eyes, or the betraying flush which rose to his cheeks when Ida spoke.

The Atherstones were so much cut off from society by their deep mourning, that "the world," in Ida's case, consisted of Lady Laura. A very little close observation convinced this lady that her fears had

a substantial foundation ; her intended son-in-law was, without doubt, deeply attached to Mrs. Atherstone, and instead of behaving as a discreet and sober young matron should do, she was doing everything in her power to fan the flame by feminine arts and coquetry. Thoughtless, no doubt (in her inmost heart Lady Laura did not accuse her of more than that), but still most reprehensible. Under these circumstances, what should a kind and wise friend have done or said ?

Arthur was no longer blind to the fact that his wife cared very little about *him*, a long-continued course of coldness and selfish frivolity on her part had opened his eyes so far, he must have been an idiot had it been otherwise, but his kind, generous heart was still willing to make excuses for her ; at any moment a word or look of love from her would have made all straight between them. No suspicion of Lord Trevor's attachment had entered his mind ; as yet his confidence in both his friend's honour and his wife's fidelity remained un-



shaken. It was plain that it would be worse than useless to speak to him on the subject, he would look on such a communication as an impertinent and malicious scandal. On the other hand, any hint to Ida was completely thrown away, she laughed it off with a gay toss of her head, and as much as told her ladyship to mind her own business.

Had no interests of her own been concerned, it is possible that her fear of consequences might have overbalanced her natural love of meddling, and Lady Laura might have left matters to take their own course, but her feelings as a fashionable matron and mother now came into play. It was a cruel shame, an intolerable injustice, that an excellent young nobleman, with almost unlimited income and irreproachable antecedents, should be allowed to fritter away his time and his affections in running after a married lady, when there were scores of unappropriated and poverty-stricken damsels (including Alda) who would have been made happy for life if he

had deigned to throw the handkerchief to any one of them.

In this dilemma a most fortunate and unexpected circumstance came to Lady Laura's aid. In spite of the jealous dislike which was growing up in her heart towards Ida, the two ladies still kept up an appearance of friendship, and had made an arrangement one afternoon to visit the Royal Academy together. Lady Laura called about three o'clock, and was shown into the drawing-room, where she found Arthur alone, looking somewhat anxious and perturbed. Her ladyship soon observed this, and asked if anything ailed Ida.

"Oh, no, she is quite well," was the reply; "but I am very uneasy about Trevor. He has just been calling here, and I never saw a fellow so altered. His looks are positively ghastly, and his manner is so nervous and strange, I am afraid something must be going very wrong with him or his affairs."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lady Laura, pursing up her thin lips. "I can't say that I pity him much. Depend upon it, he knows how to take care of himself."

"Have you noticed any change lately? You see a good deal of him."

"I *have* noticed a very decided change."

"I wish I knew how one could help him. I know none of his intimate friends besides yourself; indeed, I don't think he has any. He used to be the most open, communicative fellow in the world, but all that is changed now—to me, at least" (with a heavy sigh).

"Do you think there can be anything on his mind?"

"I think it must be that, for he is well enough in health. Surely he can't have got into money difficulties. His rent-roll is enormous, and he never used to be extravagant."

"Perhaps some unfortunate attachment may be weighing on his spirits."

"Why, I can scarcely imagine any young lady who would refuse him."

“Perhaps not ; but if the lady chanced to be married——”

Something in the tone of her voice made Arthur look up suddenly, and, woman of the world as she was, she shrank from the glance of those keen eyes. At that moment Ida entered the room, ready dressed for the expedition, and beheld her husband leaning against the mantel-piece deadly white. Lady Laura sat opposite him, looking flushed but firm. Perhaps Arthur had not observed her entrance—at any rate, he took no notice of it, but remained silent and still, and when Lady Laura rose his natural courtesy seemed to have forsaken him. He scarcely touched her outstretched hand, and never even glanced at Ida, or attempted to reply to her startled questions. Feeling more alarmed and embarrassed than she had ever done in her life before, Lady Laura hurried down the stairs, summoned her coachman with a wave of her parasol, and sprang into her carriage with more promptitude than grace.

“I shall never recover it !” she exclaimed,

leaning back on the soft cushions. "Oh, my goodness me! how dreadful he looked! *Poor dear Arthur!* Oh, you wicked, wicked girl!"

"Lady Laura, what is it? what have you been saying? Why am I wicked?" gasped Ida, who began to think the world had suddenly gone mad.

"You should never have encouraged him! Miserable infatuation! unfortunate young man! My poor Alda!"

Almost in despair of obtaining any coherent answer, Ida nevertheless continued her anxious questioning, and before the carriage stopped opposite Burlington House, she had elicited the fact that Arthur was very uneasy about Lord Trevor, and was indulging some suspicions that the alteration in his friend's manner and appearance was to be traced to a concealed affection for herself, and though she had never thoroughly believed in Lord Trevor's passionate and all-absorbing attachment, there was enough truth in all this to make Ida extremely angry. She accused Lady Laura of trying

to make mischief between man and wife, and wishing to prejudice all her friends against her, her ladyship retorted in kind, and the result was a violent quarrel.

Much that was unbecoming and untrue was said on both sides, and finally Ida insisted on getting out of the carriage, and walking home alone. She then betook herself to her own room, where she sulked all the afternoon, and finally succeeded in persuading herself that she was the most unhappy, ill-used, and unjustly treated woman in London.

It is not too much to say that Arthur was absolutely stunned by the sudden conviction that had rushed over his mind at Lady Laura's very transparent hints. When the first crushing sense of bewilderment had passed away, his thoughts cleared, and much was explained that had hitherto been a mystery to him. Lord Trevor's failure in health and spirits (so evident for months past), Ida's increasing coldness, and the many covert hints and allusions which he had often heard from different

friends, but which had hitherto fallen all unheeded on his ear.

For the whole of that weary, never-to-be-forgotten afternoon, Arthur paced up and down the drawing-room, his eyes mournful and fixed, his brow heated and throbbing—his whole appearance in those few hours changed—so utterly changed. Ah! if Ida could have seen him then her heart *must* have softened, she *must* have been inspired with some feeling of affection for her young, noble-hearted husband—so true to her, so devoted, so unselfish, and now passing through one of the worst trials that can befall human nature—a discovery that the fact of his own existence was a bar for ever to the happiness of the two beings he loved best on earth—his wife and his “own familiar friend.”

In the first shock of that overwhelming anguish, Arthur almost doubted whether it would be an unpardonable sin to put an end to a life which seemed to have no further attractions for him, while his death

would certainly open a way to happiness for Launcelot and Ida. But these wild thoughts soon passed away; his was too calm and well-regulated a mind to give way to despair.

In all his misery he had one great consolation: never for a moment was he tempted to doubt his friend's honour or his wife's fidelity. He believed that their attachment had commenced involuntarily on the part of each; that one of those strange, mysterious, inexplicable fates had drawn them together, which can neither be accounted for or resisted. Looking back on the past, he remembered Trevor's peculiarly cold, distant manner to his wife, and her evident nervousness in his presence, and the dislike she always showed to speaking of him or his affairs. He remembered, too, how much opposed she had been to his being invited to the Grange, and how he had declined to remain there more than a few days, inventing a most palpable excuse for getting away.

All these were proofs of affection on



either side, but an affection never indulged, always kept under, and as far as possible suppressed, from feelings of duty and honour. So at least it appeared to Arthur, and his eyes filled with pitying tears, and his tender heart beat with sorrow, as he thought of the trials these two dear ones had passed through, and the long dreary life that lay now before them!

With Arthur himself, to love once was to love for ever: he never even conceived the idea that at Ida's age there was yet hope that she might in time get over this ill-starred attachment, and learn to love him—her own husband. He felt most pity for *her*. Trevor might go abroad and find excitement in hunting, and the adventurous life best suited to his bold, enterprising spirit. In time he might marry, and find some consolation in the love of a tender help-meet; at any rate he was *free*. But Ida, chained, imprisoned, bound by indissoluble ties to one she could never love—could any life

be more desolate, more weary, more heart-breaking ?

After many hours of deliberation, Arthur made up his mind as to the course it was best to pursue. He would never betray the fact that he had learnt their secret either to his wife or his friend. For their own 'sake, as well as for his, he would try to arrange that they did not meet too frequently ; but when they *did* meet they should be free from any espionage on his part—they should know themselves to be trusted fully and entirely. Lord Trevor should still find in him a faithful, affectionate friend ; Ida a loving and sympathetic husband.

It was the resolve of a noble, generous nature, but nevertheless he was wrong. Knowing Ida's impulsive, unformed character, and remembering her eighteen years, he should not have allowed her to run any risks. It would have been kinder to have insisted on her accompanying him to the North Pole than to have allowed her to remain in London during

that summer. In after years he acknowledged this, but it did not occur to him now.

They dined at home that night ; and when Ida at length ventured downstairs she found Arthur unchanged in manner, though at times she fancied that his cheerfulness was a little forced, and that he looked sunk and haggard. He was commencing a difficult task, and it almost seemed beyond his powers of endurance.

Ah, reader ! can you imagine it ? Think what you would feel, were *you* a loving, devoted husband—one who had hitherto shared every secret thought with *your* wife, and whose sweetest hopes were all centred in her affection—if you were suddenly awakened to the fact that her heart was given to another—that your attachment, your caresses, your tender words, were all indifferent to her ? How often during that sad evening did Arthur bend over his wife as she sat at work, or take her hand in his in the old, loving way, and then quickly turn away and abruptly

avert his face, blaming himself that for a moment he had forgotten how abhorrent all such familiarities must be to *her* ! How often did the mournful, bitter words of one more deeply wronged occur to him that night—

“ Oh golden hair, with which I used to play,  
*Not knowing.*”

*Had* he but known the truth, he might have been spared many a bitter pang—for Ida had never loved Launcelot. Her fault had been a foolish, vain, heartless coquetry, and yet more childish than heartless, for she was but a child still. Her heart had never yet wakened to love, but the first seeds of that divine plant took root in her heart that evening.

There is a depth of wisdom in the old French proverb, “ *Il faut se faire valoir,*” which very affectionate wives and husbands do not always appreciate. As long as Arthur was always at her side paying her every attention, and bestowing upon her every caress that could occur to the most

devoted of lovers, Ida had taken it all as a matter of course, and had even at times been not a little bored by it. But in the days that now followed all this was changed. In spite of his utmost efforts, Arthur *could* not be quite the same as heretofore. In proportion as his affection seemed to decrease, Ida's gradually woke into life. We never appreciate our blessings so much as when we are in danger of losing them.

But here an unexpected difficulty met her. Believing that her heart was given to Lord Trevor, Arthur could not but doubt the reality of any affection that she seemed to express for *him*, and put away, almost with pain, the timid advances she occasionally made towards renewing their former intimate terms.

It was a wretched life for Ida, but it was good discipline, and daily her thoughts and interests became less centred on Lord Trevor, and more on her husband. But no such happier career was opening before Lord Trevor himself. Alas ! in these cases *one* must always be the victim, and fre-

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quently it is the noblest and truest heart that is called upon to suffer!

His cherished affection, like the concealed Spartan wolf, was preying on his health and spirits—aye, on his very life itself. Who that saw that noble face and figure in the park, the opera, or at some crowded assembly, would have guessed the weight of anguish he was silently bearing? Many poor, insignificant-looking, or untitled men glanced enviously at him as he passed through their midst, and secretly murmured that it was hard that on one man should be heaped every earthly blessing. Ah! they little guessed how, when he was alone, the proud bearing relaxed, the handsome face fell into weary lines of pain, and occasionally bitter tears would dim those haughty eyes, and chase their burning furrows down his haggard cheek.

On the whole we are almost disposed to acquiesce in the theory of the equality of human happiness, except in so far as we make or mar it for ourselves. It is a point—perhaps the *only* point—on which the

writer of this tale cannot bring herself to agree with the author of those genial and fascinating essays, entitled "Recreations of a Country Parson." In one of these essays we find the following emphatic statement:—

"It cannot be denied that there are persons with whom everything goes well, and there are persons with whom everything goes ill. There are people who invariably win at what are called games of chance, there are people who invariably lose."

He quotes a high authority to support his view, even the wise and good Sydney Smith, who is said to have remarked on his death-bed,

"We speak of life as a journey, but how differently is that journey performed. Some are borne along their path in luxury and ease, while some must walk it with naked feet, mangled and bleeding."

Now we make bold to say, (and the phrase is a just one when speaking in opposition to two such eminent authorities)

that this is not a correct theory. Go into the east of London, visit there some poor, emaciated, suffering cripple, lying year after year on his bed of hopeless sickness, with no single apparent cheer or alleviation in this world. Question him, and the chances are that you will find him wonderfully contented and happy, he has many sources of enjoyment unknown to you, which are all sufficient for him.

Perhaps, like Dickens' little friend, he has to "make believe very much," but his pleasures are none the less real for that. Some little puny geranium with half a dozen leaves and two buds upon it, afford him as much delight as your magnificent parterres do to you, a caged lark or the organ-grinder in the next street make as melodious music to his ear as any of your most entrancing operas. It may be said that this example, and the thousands of similar ones, which may be seen daily around us, apply to the bearing up bravely under severe and constant trials, and does not in any way disprove the fact that such



trials exist. Yet surely Sydney Smith in his metaphor of "mangled and bleeding feet," referred to the inward as well as the outward condition of man.

No, rely upon it, shade and sunshine, sorrow alternated with joy, and disappointment with success, is the natural and intended condition of man in this life. Let no despondent wretch imagine that he is pursued eternally by a malignant implacable demon, entitled Ill Luck. It is true there are Jonahs occasionally to be found in our ships whom we must get rid of at any price if we would bring the vessel safe to land, but in such cases you will find that the never changing *ill-luck* is owing to his own fault, and that if not actually fleeing from the face of God, like the prophet, his malicious fate is only another name for idleness, extravagance, or cowardice. Let us quote the lines of one of our sweetest poets (whose voice, alas, is now silent for ever) the words are not, we think, capable of only a spiritual interpretation.

“Hast thou, o’er the clear heaven of thy soul  
Seen tempests roll ?  
Hast thou watched all the hopes thou wouldst have won  
Fade, one by one ?  
Wait till the clouds are past, then raise thy eyes,  
To bluer skies.

“Hast thou gone sadly through a dreary night,  
And found no light,  
No guide, no star, to cheer thee through the plain,  
No friend, save pain ?  
Wait, and thy soul shall see when most forlorn  
Rise a new morn.

“Hast thou found nought within thy troubled life  
Save inward strife ?  
Hast thou found all she promised thee, Deceit,  
And Hope a cheat ?  
Endure, and there shall dawn within thy breast  
Eternal rest.”

Ay, “rest” even in this world, the “rest” given by a good life, a pure conscience. But no such hope came to Lord Trevor, he resolutely turned his eyes away from comfort, and refused to be cheered by the many blessings still left to him for the sake of the one unattainable treasure that was far out of his reach.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ . . . . . Ah, my God!  
What might I not have made of thy fair world,  
Had I but loved thy highest creature here ?”

TENNYSON.

“ HAVE you any plans for this morning, Ida ?”

“ I wanted to go to Prince’s, but I don’t care for sitting there alone. Will you come, Arthur ?”

“ Is not Lady Laura available ?”

“ Oh, I dare say, but I—I—don’t seem to care about her going with me. We are not such great friends now.”

“ Well, I am not sorry for that, except for poor Alda’s sake, that girl is so devoted to you. Could you not call in Chesham Place, and take her down to Prince’s for

an hour or two? she would be eternally grateful."

"You have quite settled then, not to come with me?"

"I have some letters to write, and you will be more independent alone."

"But I shall not enjoy myself so much, not *nearly* so much. Arthur, dear, do come."

A few days since how gladly would he have acceded to a request so lovingly made, but it was different now. Ida could scarcely believe her ears when he answered coldly,

"You need not suppose that I always wish to keep you in sight, Ida, I like to think that you are enjoying yourself without let or hindrance, as in the old days before you were married. You will find plenty of friends at Prince's. I shall see you at luncheon." And he left the room.

The hurt indignant tears filled his young wife's eyes, she was used to finding her little favours anticipated, not refused.

"What *can* have altered him so?" she

mused, "surely Lady Laura's ill-natured gossip cannot have had such an effect, and yet there has been nothing else to put him out. I wonder where Lord Trevor is, he has not been here for days."

She walked to the window, looked out on the sunny street, sighed wearily, and then abandoning the idea of Prince's, rang the bell to order her horse, and went upstairs to put her riding things on.

Half an hour later, she was cantering down the Row, The Brownie tossing his wicked little head, and enjoying the fresh air and exercise quite as much as his mistress. At the fourth turn, she drew rein, and paused to look about her. It is early yet, and there are only a few children scampering up and down, attended by careful grooms, and one or two jaded looking members of Parliament.

Suddenly her colour changes, and she gives a quick nervous gasp. Riding slowly down the incline advances a horse and rider, the former a black stately animal, the latter a noble-looking figure with dark

eyes, and a tired handsome face. The recognition is mutual, and Lord Trevor (for it is he) rides up to Ida, and after a few minutes' conversation, they turn their horses' heads, and ride up the Row. Who, seeing them now, so quiet, so calm, so conventionally polite in manner, would ever have guessed that a sad secret was shared between them? The lady's cheek is, perhaps, tinged with a deeper carmine than usual, and it is to be noticed that the gentleman, (albeit one of the most courteous of men), never once looks her *straight* in the face. That is all.

"I do not often see you riding here, Mrs. Atherstone."

"No; generally I do not care to come without Arthur, but this morning he did not seem to desire my company. We have not seen you for a long time, Lord Trevor. Have you been away?"

"No."

"Then you should have come to see us. Has it ever occurred to your lordship's memory that you left my picture in a very

immature condition ? Arthur is so anxious to have it finished. Every one thinks it is such an excellent likeness."

"Indeed ! I never liked it myself. I knew the task was beyond my powers when I began it."

"We all admire it very much, but you artists are so critical. When will you come and put the finishing touches ? or" (with a sudden doubt as to how Arthur would approve of this invitation), "shall I send it to your lodgings ?"

He does not fail to notice the change of tone, and glances quickly at her ; but the fair profile is turned away, and his scrutiny is wasted on a rounded cheek, and golden plaits, arranged in a glossy and intricate semi-circle.

"Do not give yourself any trouble about it, Mrs. Atherstone, I will send round for the picture some morning, and do my best to make it rather less of a gross caricature."

"You are fishing for compliments, Lord Trevor, but I shall not give you any. You

seem to have become quite an adept in pretty speeches. Who has been teaching you? They *used* not to be your forte."

He cannot reply fitly to her gay talk; all his wishes now are centred in 'one vain longing that she would turn her face, and give him a fuller view of the wonderful beauty, which seemed more sunny and glorious each time he saw it.

"You were always reproaching me for rudeness, Mrs. Atherstone. I am glad that you give me credit for becoming a little more civilized."

"Well, you must own that sometimes you *are* a little abrupt and odd. It is a pity, Lord Trevor, for it makes people think you heartless and proud. I used to think so once."

"And do you not think so now?"

"Oh, no! we are old friends *now*, and I know you better. Besides, Arthur is always telling me how kind and good-natured you really are, and how many charitable and generous things you have done for people."



"Indeed ! That is very good of him."

"There now, you speak in that sarcastic, contemptuous way. Why do you do it, Lord Trevor ? Any one would misunderstand you, who did not know you as well as I do."

"I did not mean to speak contemptuously of Arthur ; heaven forbid ! I know no one less worthy of contempt."

"It is very strange that you two should be such great friends, you are so unlike."

"Do you think that is a reason against friendship ? Most people think the contrary. If I am ever attached to a man or a woman, it is generally because they differ from me in every particular."

"Then how much you ought to be attached to *me*," she laughs. "I am sure I differ from you in every particular. You are very grave, and I am very lively ; you are remarkably dark, and I am exceedingly fair——"

"Ay,

'The fairest of all flesh on earth,'"

he murmured, half unconsciously.

Ida caught the words, but did not think it politic to notice them. Still, she ceased her gay banter, and glancing up at his half-averted face, changed the conversation to a safer and less interesting topic.

Meanwhile, Arthur, who remained under the impression that his wife intended to go to Prince's, resolved to go into the park, and take a rapid constitutional walk, in the hope of getting rid of a tendency to headache, which now often tormented him. He was not, therefore, particularly pleased to encounter Lady Laura at the park gates ; but the lady refused to be politely bowed past, and insisted on attaching herself to him, only too glad to secure so handsome and distinguished a chaperon for her morning walk.

So they walked together down the Row, and simultaneously caught sight of Lord Trevor and Ida. The conversation they were witnessing (could they but have overheard it) was innocent enough, but to a looker-on, the lady's flushed cheeks, and the gentleman's eager gaze, might have con-

veyed the idea of a serious flirtation. A flush rose to Arthur's brow ; it seemed to him that his wife must intentionally have deceived him, for he had fully understood that she meant to take Alda to Prince's. Lady Laura glanced quickly at his face, and observing some signs of agitation, ventured on the remark,

"Is that quite prudent, Arthur?"

She was startled by the calm, unruffled glance he turned on her, as he replied,

"I have perfect confidence in my wife's prudence, Lady Laura. I would trust her anywhere, and with any one on earth, and she knows it."

"You approve, then, of her riding with Lord Trevor?"

"Certainly, if she wishes it. Why not?"

"I trust she may always prove worthy of your confidence," (and then, alarmed by a sudden flash of his blue eye, added quickly), "as worthy as she is at present."

There was no reply, and, after a mo-

ment, her ladyship remarked, in a conciliatory tone,

"How very lovely Ida is looking this morning. Captain Moncrieff was saying the other day that she is the greatest beauty of this season."

"I know he always admired her."

"Dear me, Arthur, six months of matrimony seemed to have cooled *your* admiration a good deal. How you used to rave about Ida's looks at Brighton, just after you were married."

"I think her as beautiful as ever," he answered, gently, "though I may no longer *rave* on the subject. I do not see your daughter riding, Lady Laura; where is she?"

"She is at home. Ah! poor Alda! *she* will never be a beauty. It is really unfortunate that I should have such a plain daughter; I used to think, when she was a baby, that she would be like me, but nothing can be more opposite. In *my* youthful days, Arthur, I can assure you I was

much admired. I was a fair beauty, much in your wife's style."

Arthur could scarcely suppress a smile, as he glanced at his companion, and compared her dyed yellow locks (in her youth they had been dark brown) and faded, made-up complexion, with Ida's sunny, rippling hair, and rosy, transparent skin. However, he made some polite rejoinder, and soon after invented some excuse for leaving the Row.

Just as he had taken leave of Lady Laura, he heard a voice calling him from behind, and, turning round, he saw Ida, bending down to speak to him, a look of eager pleasure on her sweet face.

"Oh, Arthur, is that you? I thought you were going to be so busy this morning. Do go and get your horse, and come out, it is such a glorious morning."

"No, I don't think I will ride to-day. Go back to Trevor, dear. Why did you leave him? He will think it rude."

"Oh! he has joined some other friend.

*Do come, Arthur dear ; it is ages since we had a ride together."*

Her earnestness seems to him simple hypocrisy, but nevertheless his answer is given gently.

"I am not very well this morning, and I think walking will suit me better than riding. Take care of yourself, Ida, and don't stay out too long." And he walked rapidly away.

A sudden impulse seized Ida. She dealt The Brownie a sharp little cut of the whip, which made him cock his small ears in amazement at the unaccustomed sensation, and rode quickly back to where Lady Laura was still standing, having watched the brief interview between husband and wife with considerable interest and curiosity.

"Good morning, Lady Laura."

"Good morning, Ida. It is a long time since you have condescended to speak to me. How well you are looking."

"I have been asking Arthur to ride with me," replied Ida, quite ignoring the com-

plimentary remark, "and he has declined, and has left me to exhibit myself here alone. He never did such a thing before. What is the reason of it?"

"The reason? My dear girl, how can I possibly tell? I am not in your husband's confidence. So you actually asked him to come and join you! Dear me! how very odd!--he! he!"

"Why is it *odd*? What are you laughing at?" exclaimed Ida, white with passion.

"Oh! well, my dear, if you like to keep up this farce, pray do; it is not my concern. Only you *need* not trouble yourself to act before *me*."

"Lady Laura, how can you talk like this? You are the cause of all this mischief--*you* have been trying to prejudice Arthur's mind against me. It is untrue, unworthy, unchristian, *unladylike* conduct."

(Where had Ida's respect for the "earl's daughter" vanished now?)

"Really, Mrs. Atherstone, I cannot profess to understand you."

"But I understand *you*!" and turning

The Brownie sharply round, Ida rode away without another word, or even the usual civil gesture of farewell.

What passer-by would have dreamt of the violent words that were passing between these two elegant, highly-bred ladies—the one bending over her horse's neck, her beautiful face wonderfully white and stern, but otherwise calm enough; the other leaning negligently on the railing, her hand toying with her black lace parasol, her cold face never losing its fixed artificial smile? Ah! many a tragedy takes place around us—aye, before our very eyes—which is wholly lost upon the lookers on!

We go to a theatre, and maybe between the acts we see a flower covertly bestowed, or a hasty pressure of the hand exchanged, but we do not know that this is the signal that a cold heart has at last relented, and that two fond lovers are to be joined henceforth in an indissoluble bond! We attend a ball, and observe an acquaintance of our own leave the room suddenly, perhaps with



his cheek a little blanched, but otherwise looking much as usual. What is it to us that he has just heard the words that uttered a sentence of banishment worse than death to him, and that henceforth the light of his life is quenched for ever? A sudden, significant glance, an almost imperceptible shake of the head, the slightest possible deepening of the colour—these are signs unintelligible as Arabic to you, but which may read a sentence of life or death to your neighbour!—

“So runs the world away.”

During her solitary ride home, Ida had time to reflect over the imprudence of her conduct. She knew enough of Lady Laura's character to feel pretty sure that she had made an implacable enemy of her, and such women as her ladyship are not to be offended with impunity. And after all she had gained nothing by her undignified burst of passion: Lady Laura had not even looked disconcerted—not a line had altered of her shrewd, immovable coun-

tenance, nor had her shrill voice faltered.

Poor Ida! poor young wife! she was beginning already to pay bitterly for the foolish, heartless conduct which had led to all this humiliation and annoyance!

Besides her other vexations at this time, a serious anxiety was weighing on her mind. Arthur had paid all her Brighton debts without a word of disapproval, or even surprise, but at the same time he had settled to give her an allowance, and had requested her to keep within it. This sum appeared to her so inexhaustible that she had forthwith commenced a system of most extravagant expenditure, and was now quite alarmed at the bills which began to be sent in from all quarters. If she had scrupled to confess her former delinquencies to Arthur when they had barely passed through the honeymoon, and he seemed to think nothing too good or too costly for her, how much more did she dread such a disclosure *now*, when his once loving ways seemed to have passed away

for ever, and his manner became daily more cold and reserved.

Nothing but pure shame hindered her from appealing to Elizabeth in this dilemma, and no doubt that unselfish sister would have done her utmost to assist her; but even thoughtless Ida hesitated before making a demand which must appear so preposterous. The wealthy married sister appealing for pecuniary aid to the sister struggling with dire poverty, with scarcely income sufficient to provide her the necessary comforts of life! (Ida knew nothing of the music lessons.) No, it was *not* possible; and so she nearly cried herself blind—all but fretted herself into a nervous fever—and, in short, did everything but take the only right and straightforward course—that of confiding in Arthur.

It was a miserable household now in Cadogan Place; and yet how happy it *ought* to have been, and *might* have been. How many people had noticed the handsome young couple as they walked or drove in the Park, and remarked how well suited

they were to each other, and envied the happiness which seemed as if it must be without a flaw.

Their deep mourning prevented any gaiety, so the evenings were usually spent at home, and very dull and comfortless they were. Arthur's bright face was often clouded now, and his cheerful, genial manner was becoming a thing of the past. Not that he was ever unkind in his conduct, far from it—he was uniformly gentle, attentive, and considerate of Ida's comfort in every way. But, oh! the difference from the first happy weeks of their marriage! Arthur's nature was truthfulness and candour itself—he *could* not feign a freedom and happiness he did not feel, and oftentimes he would drop the mask of forced cheerfulness altogether, and sit for hours with a look of hopeless despondency on his face, which went to his wife's heart. Aye, *to her heart!*

Ida was beginning now to love her husband truly; she feared him, indeed, but she appreciated him more. In a hundred

little ways she strove to win back the love and confidence which seemed to be gradually slipping away from her, and sometimes she was partially successful. More often, however, he would turn away from her with a heavy sigh, and wonder bitterly why she took such pains to feign an affection for him which he *knew* was in reality bestowed on another.

Ah, well ! a time was coming soon, when they would both look back on these days of comparative peace and security as on a quiet haven to which they would fain have returned again from the dark and stormy sea beyond !

## CHAPTER IX.

“Upon this hint I spake.”—OTHELLO.

“I THINK we might go, Arthur: it is only an afternoon reception, and there will be very few people.”

“Very well, dear; you can write and accept for yourself, but I am afraid I shall not be able to go. See here.” And he handed her a few lines from Lady Atherstone, concluding with the words—

“If you could run down here for a few hours on Friday or Saturday it would be a great comfort to us. Your father is not in a fit state to transact any business, and you are sorely wanted.”

“It is very provoking, but it *always* happens so,” exclaimed Ida in much vexa-

tion. "I do not care to go to Mrs. Douglas's without you, Arthur, and I suppose you will think it your duty to race down to Arling by the first train to-morrow."

"Yes, I must go. I am sorry for your disappointment, Ida; but indeed I do not see why you should not go alone. I saw young Mrs. Baring at a party the other day without her husband, and she has been only two months married."

"Oh, Arthur, will you *never* understand me? I am not always thinking of the opinion of the world, and if I *was*, there would be nothing strange now in my going alone, but I *want* you to come with me, I *hate* going about without you."

"You see how matters stand, dear Ida, you must either go alone or refuse the invitation. I wish I could have managed otherwise."

And he left the room, as was generally his habit now when his wife became at all demonstrative or warm in her affection. Poor Ida, it *was* hard to be so misunderstood, and the hurt tears filled her eyes, as

she sat down to her writing-table, and sent a somewhat curt refusal to Mrs. Douglas. However, the matter did not end here. Mrs. Douglas sent a letter in reply, begging, that if Captain Atherstone's absence from town was likely to be short, that he and Ida would come and spend a couple of days at her villa at Richmond, on his return.

Arthur made no objection to this, and it was settled that he and Ida should go to Richmond from the following Tuesday to Thursday. During the four days of Arthur's absence, Ida shut herself up completely. Determined to give no further occasion for malicious tongues to gossip about her proceedings, she even went the length of denying herself to all gentlemen, and by this means unfortunately missed Mr. Norman, who had called during a day spent in town, charged with messages from Elizabeth. However, he made another attempt later in the afternoon, and taking the precaution of sending his name up, had the good fortune to be admitted. It struck



him that Ida was looking pale and worn, but her manner and voice were more gentle and pleasing than when he had last seen her, and the tears were standing in her eyes as she remarked sadly,

“I suppose Elizabeth does not care to come up to town. I have often written to her about it, but she seems to prefer the quiet of Daylesford.”

“Doubtless Miss Helmore does not wish to run the risk of losing her pupils, which would probably be the case if she absented herself for many days,” replied our practical curate.

“Her pupils! Oh, Mr. Norman, you don’t mean to say that Elizabeth has taken to teaching!”

“She gives music lessons to several young ladies in the neighbourhood, and is establishing a very good connection, I am told. Did you not know this, Mrs. Atherstone?”

“Know it? do you suppose Arthur and I would have allowed such a thing? My poor Elizabeth a *governess*! Oh, it is

dreadful, what must the neighbours think of us. It must be put a stop to at once."

"You must allow me to say, Mrs. Atherton, I think that would be imprudent. Miss Helmore loves hard work and independence, hers is too energetic a mind to be contented with idleness. You need not be troubled about her, she is most thoroughly happy."

"Do you often see her?"

"Scarcely a week passes without my paying her a short visit, it is one of the great pleasures of my life."

Ida glanced sharply at him, but his tone was perfectly quiet and natural, and his grey eyes met hers in calm unconsciousness. Evidently there was no love-making going on *here*. Feeling a little provoked with this strange man, she said rather abruptly,

"Then you think that she does well to go about the country giving lessons, as if she had no friends in the world?"

"I do not see that there is anything unbecoming in it, and I imagine her income is too small to enable her to live without

some such help, unless she accepted assistance from you, which she does not desire."

It was too simply said to give offence, but, nevertheless, Ida's cheeks burned. Well she knew that her own cold heartless letter had made it an impossibility for Elizabeth to receive any pecuniary help from them. After a little more conversation on this subject, Mr. Norman took his leave, and Ida went at once to her desk, took out her last remaining ten-pound note, and hastily enclosed it to Elizabeth, with a few affectionate words praying her not to refuse the sisterly gift. If we have at all succeeded in the delineation of Elizabeth's character, it will surprise no one to hear that the money was sent back by the next post, kindly, but decidedly refused. Ida dared not return it. The poor girl was doing her best to repair her former errors, but this is not always possible. It requires but a small effort to draw the bow, but who can recall the arrow when once it is shot, or heal the wound it may have caused? Of such an irretrievable nature was her

past inconsiderate conduct to Lord Trevor. With the care which is usually manifested in shutting the stable-door securely when once the steed is stolen, she was now careful to avoid meeting Lord Trevor, and when they *did* meet, no abbess of a Carmelite Convent could be more precise and rigid in her demeanour.

But the caution of a few days could not now repair the mischief that had been going on for months, cold water will extinguish a small fire, but it only adds a fiercer glow to a furnace. Mrs. Douglas had heard nothing of the reports that sundry good-natured people (headed of course by Lady Laura) had been busily circulating about Lord Trevor and Mrs. Atherstone, and knowing them to be acquainted, she very naturally arranged that they should meet at her house.

When Arthur entered her drawing-room with his wife, and caught sight of his lordship conversing with a Miss Douglas in the corner, the colour rose to his cheek, and he glanced quickly at Ida. Was it possible

that this meeting had been contrived? But her beautiful face wore an expression of natural, rather annoyed surprise, it was plain that she was both astonished and displeased. So, following his usual tactics, Arthur did not attempt any sort of guard, but turned away to converse with his hostess, leaving his wife entirely to herself. Lady Laura was there, and Ida, having fought against and conquered a very natural fear of being misunderstood, went up to her and offered her hand. It was cordially accepted, and the two ladies entered into conversation, while Lord Trevor stood near them, half concealed by a drooping curtain, his dark eyes fixed with a rapt eager interest on Ida's unconscious face, unobserved by all in the room but *one*, and that one was Arthur.

The somewhat desultory and uninteresting conversation which he was carrying on with Miss Douglas, did not prevent his observing Lord Trevor's strange behaviour, and it seemed to him that others must notice it too. After five o'clock tea, which

was served soon after their arrival, Mrs. Douglas (a weak but good-natured woman, whose one idea was to make her house pleasant by throwing friends together) remarked to Lord Trevor,

“You know the way about the grounds, my lord, and Mrs. Atherstone has never seen them. Can I trust you to do the honours of my conservatories?”

“Certainly, I shall be delighted,” was the answer, given with most unwonted eagerness. “Will you come, Mrs. Atherstone, it is a very short walk?”

Ida glanced at her husband, but he seemed intent on examining the pattern of the table-cloth, then at Lady Larra, but her face might have been carved out of sculptured marble, for all the expression that could be read there. Several strangers were in the room, and Ida felt too much embarrassed to do anything but follow Lord Trevor, who stood holding the door open, an expression of suppressed impatience on his face. Once fairly out in the garden, they walked on silently side

by side, till just as they reached the conservatory, his lordship turned round, and spoke with singular abruptness.

"I am glad to have this opportunity of saying good-bye to you, Mrs. Atherstone, I leave England to-morrow, most likely for ever, at any rate, for many years."

She gazed up at him half-frightened, the colour rapidly receding from her cheeks and lips.

"You leave England to-morrow?—Perhaps for ever? Why is this, Lord Trevor? Is it—is it because of your health?"

He smiled bitterly.

"My life is not of such consequence to me that I would forsake all my interests at home for the sake of preserving it. No, of all women in the world, Mrs. Atherstone, you are the only one who knows my secret, who will understand my reason for conduct which will appear like madness to some. *You* have no need to ask why I must leave England."

"I do not understand you," she faltered, but her ashy cheeks belied her words, and

she was compelled to lean against a pillar for support.

Even in that moment of excitement his natural high-bred courtesy did not forsake him. He placed a garden-chair for her, and then went on speaking, standing upright, and gazing down at her trembling figure with his terribly earnest eyes.

“Do not tell me you cannot understand me ; it is not true, Ida, and it is not kind. I have done my best to keep my secret from you, but I am not a good actor, and you know my heart. Oh, Ida, Ida, *why* did you force me to love you ? I was honourable and happy and trustworthy till—I knew *you*. *You* have been my ruin. *You* drew me on from strength to weakness, from weakness to sin, till I became unfaithful to my friend, forgetful of my God. How happy we were together (Arthur and I), till *you* came between us ; no two brothers were ever more attached or more confidential. What has your work been ? A work only too thoroughly accomplished. You have broken *his* heart and ruined *his* happiness, and you



have made of me a miserable God-forsaken wretch, whose one hope is that his sufferings may not last very long. Death is the kindest boon that Heaven can send the unfortunate. I pray God it may soon be granted me."

Terrible words for a young girl to hear. No wonder that she blanched and sickened, and looked up at him with an imploring expression in her large, blue eyes.

"Why do you tell me all this now? What good can it do?" she murmured.

"It may do this good," he replied, more gently than before: "you are very young, and it may chance that some day you will meet another man who will love you as I have done, as passionately, as hopelessly. When that time comes, Ida (if it ever should come), remember me; remember the life you destroyed, the hopes you blighted. Lay aside your coquetry, your loving, false, winning ways,—ay, even dim and deface your beauty if need be, do anything, *anything*, sooner than ruin another soul."

"I will! I will!" she sobbed. "Oh, leave me, Lord Trevor, I *cannot* bear this."

Seeing that he did not attempt to move she rose, and would have rushed back to the house, but he caught her hand, that little cold, white, trembling hand, and held it fast.

"One more word," he said quickly, his breath coming in short, painful gasps. "I have one last favour to ask of you. Ida, will you grant it?"

"Anything, anything."

"See, here is a red camellia bud, you gave me one at Arling just like it. Listen just this once, and I implore you be truthful. If you were not married, if in the years to come you should ever be free, if under any circumstances you could feel a single spark of real love in your heart for me, wear this in your dress to-night. I do not ask for any answer in words, but I beseech you to give me this sign. There is no harm in it, we part for ever to-morrow. Arthur himself would not deny me this one last boon."

She took the flower without speaking, and yet he held her reluctant hand, and looked down at her with loving, tear-dimmed eyes.

“Good-bye, my beautiful Ida, good-bye, golden hair, good-bye, lovely eyes, good-bye, my first, my only love, good-bye for ever.”

With a strong effort she wrenched her hand from his, and fled away across the lawn. He did not attempt to follow her, but turned down a side path that led away from the house. Neither had noticed a lady and gentleman who now emerged from the shelter of some neighbouring laurel-bushes, and stood together on the lawn, the gentleman pale and indignant, the lady flushed and triumphant.

“Why did you bring me here, Lady Laura? You have made me do a dishonourable thing.”

“I brought you here that you might be convinced, Arthur. *Are* you convinced now?”

“Convinced! I don’t understand you.”

What do you mean by talking to me in this way?" burst from his hot, impetuous lips.

"Now, Arthur, be calm and reasonable. I desire to be your friend, and to make you see the truth of this disgraceful transaction, but you *must* be quiet, and answer me straightforwardly. You saw that red camellia given, and you heard enough to show that it was a *gage d'amour*, or, at least, that it would become so if she wore it to-night."

"Ida will not wear it. I would stake my existence that she has thrown it away already. The poor child was evidently frightened, terrified almost to death, or she would not have accepted it."

"Well, we shall see this evening. I believe——"

"Pardon me, Lady Laura, but I have one question to ask *you*. You can have no particular interest in me or mine, and I can scarcely think you have any animosity against my wife. What was your object in dogging her steps in this way, and then decoying me into acting the part of an

eavesdropper? I declare to you that if I had known Trevor and Ida to be in this part of the grounds, I would have walked a mile the other way, or remained in the house sooner than have overheard their conversation."

"Arthur! Can you say that *now*?"

"I say it, because I believe my wife to be entirely innocent of so much as an evil thought against me. I have nothing to say for Trevor; nothing can excuse his having spoken to her in this way; but for Ida, my poor, innocent girl, I will hear nothing against *her*. She may have loved him in spite of herself; but from henceforth she will look on him with abhorrence, she will as soon touch a serpent as wear the flower he had the audacity to force her to accept."

"Wait a few hours, and you will see."

"But why this extraordinary interest?"

"There, there, Arthur, we need not enter on that question. I have been a friend of many years' standing of you and yours. I cannot see you hoodwinked and

deceived, without striving my utmost to open your eyes. My poor, generous, trusting Arthur, you were worthy of a better fate."

Her pity was as gall and wormwood to him. He turned abruptly on his heel, and walked away. Lady Laura stood looking after him for a moment, and then slowly retraced her steps to the house, a smile of triumph on her tinted lips. On her way she met Alda, her eyes full of tears, looking white and nervous.

"Mamma, what *can* be the matter with Ida Atherstone? I saw her going to her room just now, and I followed her to ask if she was ill, but she has locked the door, and I can hear her sobbing. Ought not some one to be with her?"

Lady Laura seized her daughter by the shoulder, and absolutely shook her in her excitement.

"Alda, you are not to go near that girl, I won't have it. Understand me, once for all, you are never to speak to Ida Ather-

stone again, or so much as mention her name as long as you live."

"Mamma!"

"Hush! I tell you she has insulted me, and behaved cruelly to you, though you do not know it. I trust we shall never see her white, deceitful face, after to-night. Oh, Mrs. Douglas, is that you? How lovely your grounds are this summer; the roses will be superb in a short time. Alda, dear child, you had better return to the house; you look fatigued."

Alda vanished, and Lady Laura walked up and down the terrace with her hostess, conversing with that suave amiability which had rendered her such a favourite in the great world.

Her mind was at ease, for she fully calculated on her revenge. Alas! not in vain had she reckoned on Ida's youthful indiscretion and romance. When the first indignant feeling had passed away, the poor girl nearly went mad with remorse and self-reproach. She paced up and down her room with clenched hands and streaming

eyes; she even tore her fair hair, and shrieked aloud in sheer nervous excitement.

After half an hour or so, the calm of exhaustion succeeded; she began to wonder if any one had missed her, and if Arthur would imagine she was out all this time with Lord Trevor. She then went to the glass, and tried to arrange her disordered dress and hair, with hasty, trembling fingers. Only then did she remember the red camellia, which had fallen from her hand, and lay neglected on the ground. She took it in her hand, and smoothed the crumpled leaves with her slender, trembling fingers.

“Poor fellow, poor Launcelot, he leaves England to-morrow for my sake!” she murmured to herself, while her hot tears fell upon the flower. “He will never see me again, he said so; surely I might give him this one little gleam of hope, otherwise he might kill himself in his despair. No one will notice this bud; I will just wear it in my dress for a moment, that he may



see it, and then I will throw it away. Still, it is acting a lie, almost as bad as telling one. I do *not* love him, I never shall love any one but Arthur, and yet—well, I will risk it.”

She placed the ill-omened bud in water, and turned to go downstairs. On her way she met Alda, who instantly averted her face, and brushed hastily by. In her simple conscientiousness, the girl felt herself bound not even to exchange a sympathising glance with her friend. Ida felt surprised, but after the terrible blow of that afternoon, it seemed as if nothing could affect her much. She went down to the drawing-room, which was fortunately untenanted, all Mrs. Douglas's guests being scattered about the grounds, and throwing herself into an easy chair, strove to calm the agonizing pain which was racking her hot, throbbing brows.

“What a lovely young creature that Mrs. Atherstone is,” Mrs. Douglas was remarking to Lady Laura, as they paced up and down the sunny terrace. “Her profile is

really quite classical, and I never saw such hair."

"There is no fault to find with her outward appearance," replied her ladyship, pursing up her thin lips, "but, nevertheless, I fear my young friend, Arthur, has made a bad bargain."

"Dear me, you don't say so. Now, I should have thought, with such a sweet young creature as that—but I suppose she is a little giddy—natural enough at her age—and so wonderfully pretty."

"When I married, I was younger than Ida Atherstone, and no one was ever able to accuse me of the slightest indiscretion."

"Ah, you were always so clever," replied Mrs. Douglas, innocently, perfectly unaware of the bitter sarcasm she had uttered.

Lady Laura glanced sharply at her, but there was no consciousness in her hostess's bland, buxom, somewhat inane countenance, so she answered, mildly,

"It is very good of you to say so, I am sure. Shall we go in, my dear Mrs. Doug-

las, the dews are beginning to fall, and that gorgeous sunset is over now?"

That evening Arthur stayed out in the garden till ten minutes before the dinner hour, in order to avoid the risk of an encounter with Lord Trevor, and then rushed upstairs, just in time to dress.

Ida was also late, and so it came to pass that they both left their rooms at the same moment, and descended the stairs together. The rest of the company were all assembled in the drawing-room; it was past eight o'clock, and every one was growing impatient and hungry. Lord Trevor and Lady Laura were gazing fixedly at the door, both (unknown to each other) watching eagerly for the same person and the same sign.

The minutes passed, Mrs. Douglas began to fidget, the gentlemen to yawn, and the ladies to whisper among themselves. What *had* become of Mrs. Atherstone and her husband!

Suddenly the door opened, and Arthur entered, very pale, but calm. He apolo-

gized for having kept the company so long, and stated that his wife was not well, and would prefer to remain quietly in her own room. In reply to Mrs. Douglas's profuse inquiries, lamentations, and exclamations, he said that Ida did not require any dinner to be sent up to her, and indeed wanted nothing but perfect rest. Lord Trevor's countenance was ashy pale, Lady Laura's expressed nothing but very decided disappointment.

What had really happened was this. As we have said, Arthur and his wife left their dressing-rooms almost at the same moment. His first thought was to glance at the flowers she wore. A white camellia nestled in her luxuriant hair, another at her bosom, but alas! alas! at her waist, scarcely visible except to a very close observer, gleamed the crimson bud, showing like a drop of blood on her black net dress,

It was one of Mrs. Douglas's delicate little attentions to her guests to provide each gentleman with a tiny nosegay for his button-hole, and this night Arthur's con-

sisted of a beautiful white geranium, and a spray of maiden hair. With a gentleness that astonished even himself, Arthur drew the flowers from his coat, and offered them to his wife, saying,

“You are in mourning, Ida, and you should not wear coloured flowers. Take these, and throw that red camellia away.”

“Conscience makes cowards of us all.”

Arthur's words were simple and natural enough, but something in his voice made Ida look up anxiously. Their eyes met, and in his white, despairing face, and the mournful look in those blue eyes, that had been used to look so lovingly upon her, she saw that he knew all.

She fell back against the wall with a low sob, and he caught her in his arms, and led her back to her own room. Then the momentary feeling of faintness passed off, and she sat upright on the sofa, and tried to look unconscious and natural.

“I felt ill for a minute, Arthur, but it has passed off. Let me go down now.”

Why have you taken away my flower? It is—it is such a tiny bud, no one would notice it.”

“Do not try to deceive me, Ida, I know everything. Lady Laura contrived that I should hear some of your conversation with Trevor in the garden this afternoon. I only caught a few words, but they told me enough.”

Quite overcome by the greatness of this calamity—a calamity exceeding any she had ever even imagined—Ida absolutely fell at her husband’s feet, and caught his arm, imploringly.

“Arthur, if you heard what we said, you must know the real truth. I have been foolish and inconsiderate, I know, and I have flirted with Lord Trevor till he has come to love me, but I never cared for him. I only wore this bud to-night because I thought he was going away for ever to-morrow, and it was the one last little bit of comfort I could give him. Indeed, *indeed*, I never loved any one on earth but you. Arthur, you do not believe me?”

“No!”

That was all he said, all he *could* say, perhaps; but the cold, bitter monosyllable, struck a cruel chill to his young wife's heart. Against that settled resolution, that unconquerable conviction, she felt that her words and tears had as little effect as rain-drops falling on a flinty stone. These generous, trusting, confiding natures, *once* deceived, are more difficult to deal with than any others.

In those few moments even Arthur's physiognomy seemed to have altered. The sweet, genial expression of his face had disappeared, the pleasant blue eyes had suddenly grown hard and stern, and the handsome, frank mouth, was sternly and firmly closed, as if to open no more in words of mercy and hope. Ida would have said more, hopeless as she saw her case to be, but Arthur checked her, still gently.

“I would rather not hear any more, Ida. If you have anything to say, you can write or speak it another time. You had better

not come downstairs, I will make an excuse for you."

He left the room without another word or look, leaving Ida almost maddened with grief and shame, utterly despairing of any reconciliation or explanation. Was she *quite* mad? Ah, who can tell, in these moments of supreme agony, the confines between reason and insanity are soon reached and easily overleaped.

However it was in this case, when Arthur went up to her room after dinner, it was empty; the jewels and the rich net dress thrown carelessly on the sofa, the little white slippers flung aside on the carpet. Had she gone, run away?

As a sudden, bitter conviction of the truth rushed over Arthur's mind, he staggered against the door, with a sharp, bitter cry. In an instant (as it seemed to him) the room was filled with eager, curious faces, and busy, prattling tongues, all exclaiming and wondering together in various distracting keys.

No one but Mrs. Douglas dared to ask



the young husband the useless question, "Where is she?" and it was not the least of his trials at that moment to meet Lady Laura's cold, cynical eyes, as he was compelled to give the fatal answer, "I do not know."

## CHAPTER X.

"I wanted warmth and colour, which I found in Lancelot  
—now I see thee, what thou art \* \*  
Is there none  
Will tell the king I love him, tho' so late?"

TENNYSON.

THAT never-to-be-forgotten dinner at Mrs. Douglas's lasted an interminable time, at least, so it appeared to Arthur. Young hearts may be breaking, and dearest hopes may be crumbling into dust, but Society must be flattered and appeased ; there is no escape from her stern, inexorable commands and requisitions.

Arthur found himself compelled to listen to Miss Douglas's pretty little inanities, alternated with long stories from her

mother (of which she invariably forgot, or missed, the point), and even to make some pretence of enjoying his dinner, and behave altogether like a happy, contented human being, while all the time his heart was aching with an anguish the more insupportable because of the stern necessity that existed of *keeping up appearances*.

Lord Trevor took in Miss Marjoribanks, and, in obedience to her mother's urgent commands, the timid girl did her poor best to make herself agreeable and amusing to her somewhat formidable companion. Vain efforts. To-night his lordship found it simply *impossible* to attempt the Herculean labour of "drawing out" his plain, uninteresting little friend. He addressed a few formal remarks to her, and then leant back moodily in his chair, the expression of his countenance more weary and hopeless than ever. Truly, he had cause for sadness. To a young nobleman in the prime of youth and health, of excellent and unblemished character, possessing a large income and innumerable ties, both of interest and affec-

tion, to attach him to his native country, a sentence of death would have been almost as tolerable as the decree of perpetual banishment he had passed upon himself. He was a talented young man, and with his wealth and connections, combined with very considerable parliamentary interest, there were few positions of honour and influence to which he might not well have hoped to have risen. Added to this, he was a thorough Englishman. His amusements, his attachments, his prejudices, were all of the old Conservative English type: he hated foreign life and foreign ways; he disliked and distrusted foreigners; and had an almost unreasonable contempt for all their ways, manners, and customs. Yet he had fully made up his mind that a life on the continent was the only career left open to him.

He could not go to India or Australia (though such a course would have been infinitely more agreeable to his tastes), for since he had entered into the full enjoyment of his property he had many interests

to guard, and much important business to transact ; his correspondence was enormous, and must be regularly attended to ; it was an impossibility for him to quit Europe for any length of time. Equally impossible was it for him to live in any part of England ; his only safety lay in flight, and it must be a flight which would place many a mile of land and sea between him and the fatal loveliness it was madness to look upon, and almost worse than death to leave. But the honourable instinct—though long repressed and subdued—had now risen, and asserted itself boldly, and Lord Trevor was resolved. Yes, he had heard the music of the hounds for the last time ; for the last time he had tasted the eager exhilarating, delight of riding in hot chase over the breezy downs and broad sunny fields of merry England ; for the last time he had ridden the “ Black Prince,” and stroked the proud, glossy neck of the gallant horse that had been almost a friend to him.

Other and nobler regrets too crowded fast on his mind. Looking across the table

at the white haggard countenance of him who had once been his best friend, old sweet memories of the days that were gone came back to him—days when they two had been joined together in an intimacy so strong that it seemed as if death itself would be powerless to destroy it. Even now, Arthur was the same, it was he, Launcelot, that was so changed. Yes, there were the kind blue eyes whose glance had so often deterred him from acts of folly or of sin; there were the strong hands, powerful as an athlete's, but gentle in their touch, when gentleness was needed, as the tenderest woman's—hands that had once nursed him through an attack of fever in India with a skill and care born of the tenderest and most self-denying affection. Ah, well! it was all over now. Probably they would never meet again, and it was better so. Separation was easier than estrangement; if their hands were never again to meet in the old cordial grasp, it was best that they should be parted for ever.

It was a comfort that there was no one to pester him with contemptuous pity or uncongenial advice. Except his own solicitors, no one knew of the strange resolution he had formed, not one of that gay party had the least idea that they were looking for the last time on features that were as familiar to them as "household words."

The dreary dinner at length came to an end, but the gentlemen sat long over their wine, and it was fully two hours before Arthur was at liberty to go to his own room, and there discovered the fact of Ida's flight. Another half hour was spent in a vain search throughout the house and grounds, and then Arthur declared his conviction that his wife had returned to her own home, and no arguments could deter him from setting out at once for Cadogan Place, where he arrived after a long wet ride, for it was raining furiously. It was, perhaps, natural that the first suspicion which occurred to Arthur's mind, as well as to Lady Laura's, was that Lord Trevor knew the secret of this mysterious

disappearance. However, his grief and surprise, indeed almost despair, at this new and unforeseen calamity were so evident that the thought was dismissed as soon as entertained, and he was not even questioned.

But it is time to return to Ida's actions on that fatal night. When Arthur left her, she sat for a time in a dull stupor of despair; her mind was too confused to enable her to think calmly, but gradually one idea began to shape itself distinctly out of the misty horror that seemed to envelope her. In her inexperience and utter want of knowledge about worldly matters, she never doubted but that Arthur meant to get rid of her in some way—if not actually to divorce her, to send her away; she had no hope of ever regaining her place in society as his wife; she felt utterly disgraced, utterly forsaken. How could she prove to him that she had never cared for Lord Trevor, that she had listened to his wild confessions through sheer bewilderment of mind, that pity, a remorseful



tender *pity*, and not affection, had induced her to wear the flower which was to be a signal of hope to him? How far less could she ever hope to persuade him that she was fast growing to love him, her own dear husband, that her eyes were at last opened to see the inestimable worth of an affection such as his, the glory of belonging to a man of such noble, generous, unselfish character.

No ray of comfort illumined the utter wretchedness of this hour; if a shadow falls across the brightness of extreme youth, it is more impenetrable if more transient in its nature than the sorrows of riper years. Before long these emotions became too much for her; the fever which glittered in her eyes and fevered her trembling hands began to goad her into immediate action. She rose from her seat, and going to the dressing-table opened the drawer, took out the velvet purse which lay there, and examined its contents. Her extravagancies had left very little of her handsome allowance; there was the ten-

pound note which Elizabeth had returned, and about seven shillings in silver, that was all, but she deemed it more than enough for her purpose. Hastily she divested herself of her evening dress, but, alas ! there was nothing more suitable at hand for a night journey than the delicate black muslin in which she had arrived that morning, her pretty, French bonnet, and costly lace mantilla.

Once dressed, she paused not to look around, lest her trembling resolution should altogether fail, but crept to the head of the stairs and listened for a moment to the sounds of merriment coming up from the dining-room below. She fancied she could detect Mrs. Douglas's inane chuckle, and Lady Laura's shrill laugh ; but they were safely disposed of in there for the next hour or two, and this was all that concerned her. Stealthily but swiftly she sped down the broad staircase ; then, not daring to pass through the hall, for fear of encountering one of the men servants, she entered the drawing-room, and passed from

thence into the garden through the still open window. Here a fresh misfortune awaited her in the pouring rain, which wetted her to the skin in a few minutes, ill protected as she was from any inclemency of the weather. But she heeded it little; nay, the cool drops fell gratefully on her heated brow, and seemed to brace her weary frame with their perilous freshness. On she hastened down the broad gravel path, through the great iron gates, out into the road, till the twinkling lights behind her faded into the darkness, like the joys and hopes of the life she was leaving for ever.

No conveyance could be procured at that time of night without application at the hotel, and she dared not venture upon this. Her only course was to walk, and walk she did, every step of those weary miles between Richmond and London. She walked till her wet clothes hung round her with a weight like lead, and the thin soaked shoes became torn and split, and worse than no protection to her tender feet. But little

recked she ; her one idea was to get away—away—away from the old life, away from Arthur, away from Lord Trevor and Lady Laura, away from all those who had known her in happier days, and would now never have the opportunity of reproaching her with her heartlessness and folly.

Once a horseman passed her on the road, and trembling with vague fears, she stood under the shelter of the hedge till he had passed. Ah ! Arthur's eyes must have been blinded by tears as well as by the misty fog and driving rain, or he would not have failed to recognize that slender figure, though the pretty dress was all torn and soiled, and the carefully tended golden hair hung down in rough wet curls. As it was, he carelessly noted a crouching female form there in the darkness, and rode on in hot haste, perhaps with a passing thought of pity for the poor creature who could find no better shelter on so boisterous a night.

Happily, before she had quite reached London a fly passed by, probably having

conveyed some revellers to Richmond from town. The man fortunately heard Ida's call, stopped his horse, and took her in, inquiring, with no very great show of respect, where she "wanted to be druv to?" She had made no plans, but before his amazed suspicion at her hesitation found vent in words, she replied hastily with the name of the station with which she was most familiar, "Victoria." At the Victoria Station, therefore, was she deposited, a little after two o'clock in the morning, and having dismissed the cab, stood alone on the platform, as desolate and helpless a creature as any in the whole wide world. The rain had ceased, and the first grey streaks of dawn were beginning to struggle through the thick atmosphere. Ida managed to drag her stiffened limbs to where a time-table hung against the wall, and tried, by the dim light, to make out the names of some stations on the Brighton line, but her weak eyes, half blinded and swollen with tears, refused to perform this difficult task — she could not read a

letter distinctly, and was forced to abandon her design till the light became clearer. A sudden feeling of irresistible weakness and fatigue now came over her ; she staggered to a bench, and there, in spite of cold and misery, fell in a few moments into the heavy dreamless sleep of exhausted nature. After a time she was awakened by a rough but not unkindly voice speaking close to her ear.

“ Oh, lor, Bill, look 'ere ! ain't she a pretty creature ? ”

“ Pretty or not pretty, she's no call to be sleeping here at this time of the morning,” replied a gruff voice. “ Come, young woman, wake up, will you ? ”

Only half aroused, Ida sat up, and gazed around her with a bewildered stare. Her eyes fell on the sombre, begrimed faces of two railway porters, both regarding her with looks of wonder and curiosity ; and, startled and horrified, she felt as if she must be in some horrible trance, and stretched out her hands with a frightened cry.

“ Oh, Arthur ! Arthur ! where are you ? ”

“ He ain’t where he ought to be, in my opinion,” answered the man who had first spoken ; “ he ought to be ashamed of himself, leaving a pretty young thing like you to wander about in this way. Oh, lor ! ”

This last exclamation was caused by a sudden turn of Ida’s ungloved hand, displaying a full view of the costly rings and a handsome bracelet which in her hasty flight she had forgotten to remove.

“ ’Tis a lady for sure,” he muttered ; “ might have seen that before. Here, miss, take a pull at my flask, you’re trembling like a leaf.”

Ida mechanically allowed a few drops of the brandy to be poured down her throat, and then her faculties began to clear a little. She rose from her seat, and glanced at the time-table close to her, then, turning round, she asked in a voice which sounded strangely hoarse and unnatural to herself—

“ When does the next train leave for Keighley ? ”

"Next train starts at 6.10," replied "Bill," in a brief professional tone; "arrives at 7.30. No changes. Starts in half an hour's time."

And considering his duty amply fulfilled in having thus premeditated and answered all the questions usually put by the female traveller, the porter strolled away, and took no more trouble about the matter. Not so his younger and softer-hearted companion. He stood motionless for a moment surveying the forlorn, trembling figure, and then came up close to her side and said respectfully—

"Is there anything I can do for you, miss? You seem but poorly. The refreshment-room is open; should I get you anything?"

"Thank you, I think—perhaps it might do me good. Here."

She placed half-a-crown in his hand, and he hurried off, and returned in a few minutes with a basin of steaming soup and a glass of sherry. Humanly speaking, that timely refreshment saved her life. The



friendly porter watched her while she swallowed the soup, carried the glass and basin back to the refreshment-room, and did not lose sight of her till the train came up, and he saw her comfortably settled with her ticket in a first-class carriage.

Ida leant back in her seat, and watched the country scenes fly past the windows with a vague, dreamy sensation, as if all this was some strange delusion, and she should wake up in a few minutes and find herself in her own pretty bedroom in Cadogan Place. What? could it be that she, Ida Helmore, always used to be so carefully guarded and cherished, who had scarcely ever taken a walk alone in her life, was rushing about the country in this mad way, taking long midnight journeys on foot, and sleeping at railway stations? Oh, monstrous, absurd, impossible. She would wake up very soon, and laugh with Arthur over her vivid dream, very soon, very soon. And again the tired head drooped against the hard cushions, and she slept soundly till the train stopped at Keighley, and the

porter came and opened the carriage door. She got out, and gazed around with some curiosity. What sort of place was this which she had chosen to visit at random, just because she imagined it to be small and unknown, and therefore a good hiding-place? A simple little country station, with one or two fawning porters, a large clock, a row of flourishing laurels, and one or two dwarf scarlet geraniums, beyond a few scattered houses, and several cottages, perhaps half-a-dozen cheap-looking villas, all very ordinary, very dull, very uninteresting.

That strange dreamy sensation was beginning to pass away, and Ida began to feel awake, keenly and painfully awake. As she walked from the little station down a broad, steep lane leading into the village, her head throbbed with so much violence as almost to deprive her of her senses, and her mouth felt absolutely parched with feverish heat and burning thirst. She walked on as quickly as her stiffened limbs would permit, fearing that her mind might

soon become confused, and paused at a little inn by the road-side, ornamented by a sign on which was depicted an enormous flower, with a quantity of leaves and buds, underneath which was inscribed in large letters "The Blue Bell." She rang the bell, which was answered by a buxom landlady, dressed in a bright green cotton, with large, merry black eyes, and fat crimson cheeks.

"Have you a room to let here?" asked Ida, dragging out her words with infinite difficulty.

"Yes, miss; I think we might accommodate you. Will you step in? Oh, dear me, how ill you do look!" (with a sudden warmth of tone). "Come into the kitchen, miss; there's a nice fire there, and you look famished."

Once in the comfortable country-looking room, with a bright fire on the hearth, and a huge nosegay of wallflowers on the table, she felt cheered, and would fain have spoken and asked a few questions of the good landlady, who stood looking at her with

an expression of sympathy mixed with considerable astonishment. No wonder. In the train Ida had twisted up her hair and arranged her wet, disordered dress, and though she had lost her gloves, and her little shoes were in holes, there was about her an air of unmistakable refinement and even fashion, while the fever that had seized her in no way impaired her wonderful beauty and the proud dignity of her carriage.

Such young ladies do not often arrive at little country inns at eight o'clock in the morning and ask for rooms, and good Mrs. Gillot scarce knew whether to feel most surprised, alarmed, or flattered. The two stood gazing at each other for a minute or two in dead silence, and then a dark mist suddenly crept over the sunny room, and Ida fainted dead away in her hostess's arms, which were fortunately strong enough and kindly enough to bear the burden well. When she came to herself she was lying on the bed in a small but very clean little room, sedulously attended by Mrs. Gillot

and her handmaiden, a stupid, healthy-looking girl of about sixteen, with very red bare arms, and wide, staring blue eyes.

"There, there, my dear, you're better now," said the landlady, and her pleasant, motherly voice sounded like a cordial in the ears of her poor young guest. "What a sudden take it was, to be sure, but you're coming round nicely now. Give her another sniff of them salts, Susan, and keep on rubbing of her feet. They are like stones."

"Thank you, you are very kind," Ida replied, half raising herself up with a strong effort. "I have had a long walk, and I was very tired, that was all. I was very unlucky, and lost my luggage. My—my friends will join me in a few days. Could you let me have this room till then? I—I am willing to pay anything reasonable for it."

"Well, miss, this room and the sitting-room next to it usually lets together; you could have them for fifteen shillings

the week, and no extra charges for board or attendance."

"Thank you, that seems very moderate. I will take them at once. And—I believe it is usual to pay in advance; you will find a ten-pound note in my purse, will you get it changed?"

She handed the pretty little velvet toy to Mrs. Gillot, who being, fortunately, an honest woman, returned her the correct change, after deducting a week's rent.

And so it came to pass that Ida passed several days in the quiet little inn, carefully waited upon and nursed by the kind-hearted landlady, till the fresh country air and complete rest restored her to health. Occasionally during the attack of nervous fever, which was the natural consequence of her adventures, her mind wandered, but generally it was clear, too clear. Could she ever forget those long weary hours spent in that dull sunny little room, with its staring blue paper, and dazzling yellow blinds?

Sometimes she would try to divert her

mind by counting the little white balls which ornamented the curtains of her bed; then she would try to pass an hour by studying the airy vagaries of the flies on the ceiling, till the whitewash tired her eyes, and she would turn restlessly on her hot pillow, and sigh for the soothing slumber that so seldom came to rest her aching head. Often her thoughts would revert to the *last* time she had been unwell at Arling Grange, and what a tender, loving nurse she had then in her husband. She remembered now how he would sit for hours in her shaded room, showing as much care and solicitude as if she had been really dangerously ill, though it was but a cold; how her every wish was gratified almost before it was expressed; how he gave up all his few hours of leisure that she might be left to no other hands. Shutting her eyes for a moment, she could almost fancy that she saw the fair, handsome profile, as he used to sit reading to her for a whole long afternoon, a ray of sunlight stealing in through the closed blind

and lighting up the noble head with its clustering, glossy curls. Again she could almost hear the deep, manly voice subdued to a low, gentle tone, that she might not be disturbed, giving orders for her convenience and comfort, or sometimes to gratify some childish whim which she had ceased to care for when once it was granted.

Ah ! how little she had prized that devotion, which had seemed as natural and common a gift as the air she breathed. What would she not give now for one of the loving smiles, the tender caresses, which had *then* been too lavishly bestowed upon her for her to rate them at their true value ?

Would Arthur but return to her again, and all the sad, unsatisfactory past be forgotten, and a new trial allowed her, how different it should be ! What a loving, devoted wife she would make ! how kind, how unselfish, how obedient ! But no, there was no hope of that. He would *never* forgive her, *never* trust her again. Her



life was spoilt for ever; her hopes of earthly happiness were blasted irretrievably.

Good Mrs. Gillot scarce knew what to make of her interesting patient. When fever set in she had summoned the village doctor, a Mr. Wray, who shook his head over the whole mysterious story, and gave it as his opinion that the young lady's friends (if she had any) should be communicated with at once.

Armed with this decided authority, the landlady had straightway mounted to Ida's little room, and there and then begged her to name some relative or friend that could be written to, as it was not fit that one so young and delicate should be living quite alone, even under the shelter and protection of the immaculate "Blue Bell."

Upon this, Ida had assumed an air of dignified reserve, and replied that she was much obliged for all the kindness that had been shown her, but that she must refuse to confide her private affairs to Mrs. Gillot, or to any one else. If they did not wish to keep her, she was quite ready to go; she

did not wish to annoy any one, or be a burden on anybody, but her desire was to live quite privately and alone. She had no friends that could be written to, and she wished that no one would trouble themselves about her affairs—she was well able to manage them herself.

Mrs. Gillot quickly descended the stairs, and told Mr. Wray, with tears in her eyes, that she had spoken her last word on the subject to her visitor; from henceforth she should be allowed to remain quiet and unquestioned in the haven she had chosen.

“For,” ended the good soul, “she’s a born lady, if ever there was one; and a gentle, sweet-spoken, pretty creature as ever stepped. She shan’t be turned out or tormented if all the village was to go down on their bare knees to ask me to do it.”

Mr. Wray had no intention of going down on *his* bare knees with any such request. He privately deemed the kind-hearted landlady a foolish, romantic body, who would probably never see the colour

of her rent; but it was no affair of his, and he said no more about it.

After this interview, Ida took the precaution of burning all the few letters and papers, that she had about her, even tearing a few stray memoranda out of her pocket-book; and this was her last responsible act for several days. Whether it was owing to the unusual heat of the weather, or to her great and daily-increasing distress of mind, she suddenly became much worse. Delirium came on, with all its innumerable horrors, both real and imaginary; and who can tell the wild and terrible fancies that tortured her poor fevered brain? Sometimes she would fancy herself again a happy, careless girl at Arling; and over and over again she would hum to herself a verse of one of Elizabeth's favourite songs, suggested probably by the name of the inn—

"Oh where, and oh where, does your Hieland laddie dwell?

"He dwells in bonnie Scotland, at the sign of the 'Blue Bell.'"

The sweet, sad tune, with its sadder,

sweeter words, haunted her brain; and Mrs. Gillot's eyes would fill with pitying tears many times a day, as she heard the fresh, young voice, now so weak and strained, making an ineffectual attempt at melody.

Then darker fancies came, and again Lord Trevor's reproachful face rose before her, and she heard the sad, bitter words, "I was honourable, and happy, and trustworthy, till I knew *you*." Then his expression seemed to change, and he held a dagger fiercely to her throat, crying that such women were not fit to live. And lo! Arthur stood by, with stern demeanour and averted face, and made no effort to save her.

But there is little need to recapitulate all the dreary scenes and visions that rose before her mind's eye in these few terrible days; it is a happier task to tell of the time when at last the clouds began to lift, and slowly—very slowly—her strong, healthy youth battled successfully against the force of disease, and Ida began to recover. Still she continued weak and feeble

as a child for many days ; but, strange to say, though nothing in her outward circumstances had altered, a wonderful peace and calm seemed to have come over her mind. She would lie for hours on the little white bed by the open window, her large eyes fixed on the deep blue sky and the tiny white clouds that flecked its surface, as though drinking in the quiet, peaceful spirit breathed in that grand illimitable expanse.

She could see nothing but sky and trees from that window ; but from below the sweet smells and sounds of the country came up and saluted her with the remembrance of Arling, and the dear old happy life she had lived for eighteen years.

Yes, she had been happy once, and there was no reason that she should not be happy again. Arthur was not a stern Eastern despot, but a kind and reasonable English husband. Surely he would take her back, and consent to forget the past, now that she was so sorry, so willing to own herself to have been in the wrong, and humble her-

self, if need be, to the very dust for his forgiveness. In a few days, when these trembling hands should be more under control, and this burning brow less feverish, she would write to him, and write such a letter as would not surely fail to bring him again to her side.

But her strength is so long in returning.  
The early summer is passing away,

“May glides onwards into June,”

and still the pale, slight form lies on the bed, the dreamy blue eyes still seek that pure sky, while she watches, waits, and plans.

## CHAPTER XI.

"Let no man dream but that I love thee still."

TENNYSON.

It was the 7th of June—a warm, lovely morning. Ida had left her room now, and was sitting in the little parlour adjoining, a far pleasanter room, with a less glaring paper, a few cheerful prints, and one comfortable easy chair.

Her letter to her husband was written at last, and had just been given to the little maid, Susan, with strict injunctions to post it without delay. Now that she had made up her mind to the effort, she wondered that she had hesitated so long, and forgot all her fears in a great longing for Arthur's presence.

She was much altered by her illness. The delicate outline was sharpened, and her thin cheeks had lost their beautiful rosy tinting; but the pale lips seemed to have forgotten their haughty curve, and the sweet, patient expression of those sad blue eyes—if less strikingly lovely—was far more winning than of old.

Sitting there, in that quiet, homely little room, dressed in a simple black gown, her fair hair neatly rolled up behind, in the way that gave least trouble, there was not much appearance of fashion about her. Fever and remorse—the two sorest trials to which the mind and body can be subject—had dimmed her radiant beauty, and worn deep hollows in the once joyous young face; but nothing could alter that exquisite contour, or detract from the perfect gracefulness that had always been natural to her. She was the same Ida, but *with a difference*, and the difference lay deeper than the outside ravages caused by illness.

If Mrs. Gillot had been asked her candid opinion of her young lodger, she would



have answered that she was a sweet, gentlemanly young lady, who gave very little trouble, and was always perfectly satisfied with the very simple arrangements of bed and board that were provided for her.

The servants in Cadogan Place would have told a very different tale. Yes; sorrow generally has a decided effect in either sweetening or embittering the character. It was doing Ida much good, and she was beginning now to realise it. The scent-laden breeze came pleasantly in at the open window, and she rose and stood there, letting them fan her white brow, and lift the soft waves of hair in their gentle caress.

Standing there, she did not hear Mrs. Gillot's quiet entry into the room with the luncheon tray, but she was roused by the landlady's somewhat nervous exclamation,

"If you please, miss, there's a gentleman down stairs a asking for you; shall I show him up?"

Ida's lip trembled, but she had not time to answer, for there was a quick, decided

step on the stairs, and in another moment she saw Arthur. He made a sign to the startled landlady, and they were left alone together.

Ida could not look up or speak. A keen, desolating remembrance of their last interview came over her, and she leant against the window-seat, her breath coming fast and painfully, her cheeks as white as her little trembling hands. It seemed to her like half an hour, but in reality it was only a minute or two, before Arthur pushed forward the only easy-chair the room afforded, and placed her in it. Then taking the glass of wine from the tray on the table, he held it to her pale lips.

"My poor child, you must have been ill?"

"Yes," she faltered, "but I am better now, I can sit up. Oh, Arthur! won't you kiss me? won't you say you are glad to see me after all this long time?"

"I am very glad to have found you," he answered, quietly, "you have given me many weeks of anxiety. Ah, well" (cor-

recting himself), "only five, but it has seemed an eternity. You had better not try to talk, Ida; sit quite still for a few minutes, there is plenty of time."

He walked to the window, and stood looking out, with his back towards his wife, so that she could only catch a glimpse of the handsome, fair profile. Still, she could see that he was looking worn and pale, and there was a weary, listless droop about his whole figure and attitude, which startled her very much. He had used to be upright, even to a fault. Was it illness, or care for her, that had altered him so greatly in these few weeks? Disappointed, bitterly disappointed, as she was at his cold greeting, this last thought overcame any lingering remains of pride. Rising from her chair—not without difficulty—she walked across the room, and laid her slender hand on his arm.

"Come and talk to me, Arthur, I have so much to say to you."

He turned at once, but it was only to sit down in the old-fashioned window-seat,

while he motioned her back to the easy-chair.

"I am ready to hear all you wish to say, but do not fatigue yourself; you had better have rested a little first."

"Don't speak to me like that, Arthur!" she exclaimed, almost passionately, while the rich, dangerous colour flooded her transparent cheeks. "I have been very wrong; I am ready to acknowledge everything, but——"

She paused, half frightened at the expression of his face, and ended by the faint question,

"You have been very anxious about me; has it—has it made you ill, *very* ill? Speak to me! tell me all the truth."

"I have not been well," he replied, in the same courteous, measured tone that he had spoken in before; "but there is no thing to alarm you, and I am better to-day. Tell me about yourself. How did you come here?"

In a few brief sentences she told him the history of the past few weeks. He listened

attentively, occasionally putting a question, but he never turned his eyes towards her, and once, when she laid her hand imploringly on his, he gently put it aside. When she had told all her tale, she ventured to put the question,

“I suppose everybody knew about my going away? Has there been much talking about it?”

“You could not expect that there would not be a good deal of gossip; you could scarcely have done a more foolish thing, if you cared to preserve the good opinion of the world.”

“How did you find me out?”

“We heard accidentally of your whereabouts from a porter at the Victoria Station; but that is a long story, it is of no use to enter upon it now. I have other matters to decide——”

“One word. Did you know that I had written? No; of course there has not been time.”

“You had written?”

For a moment his eyes met hers in glad

surprise, but they were instantly averted at her sad answer,

“Only this morning!”

After a moment's silence he spoke again, but with an evident effort, while he seemed to grow paler every moment.

“I have resolved to go abroad at once. England has become distasteful to me for many reasons, and I am told that the climate of the south of France will give me the best chance of recovery.”

“Not alone ! not alone ! Arthur, Arthur, you will take me ?”

Had he but glanced at her imploring face, he *must* have seen that she was sincere, but in his eyes her earnestness was hypocrisy. These were the words, the tone of a woman who loved, and her love was given to Lord Trevor. He would not be deceived again, so he answered, coldly,

“No ; I have settled for you to remain with your sister. I have telegraphed for her from the station, and she will no doubt be here in an hour or two. I should have preferred your being at Arling Grange, but

that is impossible." He paused abruptly. Ida understood that they would not receive her. Ah, how deeply she must have offended, to have lost the sympathy even of kind Lady Atherstone. Arthur went on quickly, "I will write you a letter about business particulars, but I may as well tell you now that you will be able to draw two hundred pounds a quarter, which I think will enable you both to live in some quiet place together. I wish it could have been more, but I have had many heavy and unexpected claims to meet lately."

*Her* debts, no doubt. Her bitter sigh was not unobserved by him, but he took no notice of it, nor of her low repentant exclamation.

"There is one more thing I must say to you, Ida, before we part, it may be for ever. My late illness—I might say my *present* illness—is the same affection of the heart which has been so fatal to all our family. It may be that I shall recover; it is my duty to do the best I can for my health, though God knows it is a weary duty, and

one I would gladly give up. If I recover, what I am going to say will be useless, and we must try and get on as best we can, but if I should *not*”—here he advanced closer to her, and spoke in a lower tone—“if it should please God that I should die, as so many of my family have died, then remember, Ida, that you have my permission, fully and freely given, to marry Launcelot Trevor. No, don't shrink! don't turn away! You must hear me patiently, dear, it is most likely the last time I shall trouble you. You have not been happy with me, Ida, I do not know whose fault it was, and it is not of much use to inquire now; but I am inclined to believe that you never cared for me; you were (I think) tired of Arling, and was glad to take the first opportunity of getting away from it. I am not surprised that you cared for Trevor; no doubt he did his best to attract you, and you were very young. But, oh, Ida! why could you not have been open with me? Why have you gone on day after day with your false, sweet words and caresses (as you



would have done even *now*), till you made me believe that your heart was mine, and that you were as loyal-hearted a wife as any in England? Had I been such a hard, cruel husband to you that you *dared* not confide in me, *dared* not be open, and truthful, and honourable?"

"Do me justice, Arthur!" she moaned, as he paused for a moment, and wiped his damp, white brow. "I will tell you all the truth. I did *not* love you at first, I own it. I was tired of my life at Arling, and I did my best to marry you, that I might have a chance of leaving it; but I intended to make you a loving wife. I knew how generous and good you were, and you were so kind to me, that I must have been heartless indeed if I had *always* remained insensible to it. I flirted with Lord Trevor as far as I could (for he was always cold and distant with me), but I never loved him, oh, never, *never*! But I thought it would be such a triumph to attract a man like him, who had never cared for any woman in his life, and I did not think how these

things grow. I never meant him to love me *really*, I never meant to spoil his life ; it was only for fun, and to tease Lady Laura, and because it was so dull at Arling."

" You acknowledge, then, that he loved *you* ?" said Arthur, looking steadily at her with his stern, calm, blue eyes.

" Yes, I know that *now* ; but for a long time I did not believe it. How could I ? He was always so distant in his manner to me, even when we were quite alone. He never forgot himself till that evening at Mrs. Douglas's ; and then it was in order that I might be warned, by seeing the mischief I had done. He would not have spoken then, but that he was going away. The only wrong thing he ever said or did was asking me to wear that camellia ; and what did that signify, as we were never to meet again ? *His* conduct has been most generous and noble throughout ; it was I who was in fault. Arthur, you *must* believe me !"

He made no reply for a minute or two, and then spoke in the same cold tone, his

eyes fixed on the fair distant prospect seen from the open windows.

“I trusted you, Ida, far longer than most men would have done. The world believes I trust you still, and calls me a fool for doing it. Even now, neither Lady Laura, or Mrs. Douglas, or any one else, dare say a word against you in my presence. But we are alone now, and there is no need for deception. What passed that night at Richmond was but the last link in a long chain of evidence, the truth of which had been forcing itself on my mind for weeks before. I do not wish to be unjust; I believe part of what you have told me; I acquit you of any intention to do wrong; I will believe that you always intended to continue what the world calls faithful to me; but, Ida, there is a treason of the heart, and you have been guilty of this. Those sweet lips were never really mine; not one of the many loving words you have spoken to me ever came from your heart; our married life was one long course of deception on your side.”

He had risen as he spoke, and stood looking down at her tear-stained face, a whole world of love in his sad, yearning eyes.

"Yet I did my best to make you happy, dear ; in all these months I cannot accuse myself of one unkind or even indifferent word. But the passionate affection I gave you must have been a slow torture to you—you who never loved me. It must have been so from the first ; and how much more afterwards, when you came to love another ? Looking back on the past, I pity you—I pity you and forgive you from my heart."

She looked up into his face with a sudden gleam of hope.

"You forgive me, Arthur ; then you will let me come with you ; you will let me *prove* that I love you ? You will not leave me here to think of you, in a foreign land, alone and ill, perhaps dying ? Say that you will not—say that I may come ?"

"No, dear ; not that."

"*Never* again ?"

"Never again."

He was answering his own thoughts

rather than her question ; but the mournful, despairing words sounded to her like the death-knell of all her hopes. The summer breeze seemed to whisper them as it gently swept the roses outside and rustled their clustering leaves against the window ; even the low twitter of the swallows, that had sounded so sweet and joyous before, now seemed to breathe the same sad, hopeless decree—" Never again, never again !"

Ida was very weak, and the tide of conflicting emotions was altogether too much for her. She sank back in her chair, not fainting, but wholly unable to speak, her one instinct to hold fast by Arthur's hand ; and she held it in a close, painful grasp, which seemed as if it never would uncloze.

How long they sat thus she never knew. When she fully came to her senses, the late afternoon sunshine was streaming into the little room with a crimson glow, and she was quite alone.

## CHAPTER XII.

"There is a lady I do know,  
And I love her still the same ;  
Through the worlds where'er I go,  
Never shall my lips proclaim  
All I suffer for her sake,  
And I love her still the same,  
Though I never breathe her name."

*Song.*

ON the evening of the day that witnessed Arthur's visit, Elizabeth arrived. She found Ida in a state which caused her considerable anxiety. Alternate fits of excitement and depression sorely tried the delicate frame, and occasionally she would sit for hours in a state of moody silence, which seemed bordering on despair. In such an emergency, a better nurse than Elizabeth

could not have been found. There was something in her placid, recollected face which had once irritated Ida, but now had a wonderful effect in calming and cheering her wounded spirit. Her pure, unworldly mind was prone to look more at a sin than its consequences ; she never thought of reminding her sister of the worldly position and consideration she had endangered, if not sacrificed, as if true repentance was to be won by such means ; but she strove to bind up the broken heart by gentle, loving words, taking care neither to palliate the wrong-doing, or allow sorrow to degenerate into hopeless despair.

It was a convincing proof that Ida's once haughty spirit had been well nigh subdued, that she made a full and free confession to her sister, and seemed perfectly willing to adopt advice and listen to reproof.

It was on the third evening after Elizabeth's arrival that the sisters were sitting together in the little front room. Ida was resting on the sofa, in the weary, listless position that was becoming habitual to her,

watching her sister's deft fingers as she cut out a frock for a poor woman's child at Daylesford. After nearly half an hour's silence, Elizabeth raised her calm grey eyes, saying—

"I think, dear, it is time for us to settle where we will spend the rest of the summer. I was thinking to-day that Eastbourne might suit us. It is a quiet, pretty place, and you are so fond of the sea."

"I think we do very well here. Why should we move?"

"Arthur wrote me word that he should advise you to go to the sea. You will like to do what he wishes?" she added, gently.

"Yes."

"Can you think of any place you would prefer to Eastbourne?"

"No. I would rather that you choose. I am sure you have a right to choose. You must be very sorry to leave Daylesford, Elizabeth. I know you were fond of the life you led there; but, at any rate, it is a comfort that you have given up teaching."

"It was my duty to come to you, dear;



and I shall find some other way of supporting myself hereafter, when Arthur returns."

A minute's silence; then Ida looked up suddenly.

"Elizabeth, do you believe he ever will return? Do you think he *means* to return?"

"I am quite certain of that. Life and death are in the hands of God; but if Arthur is alive, you will see him home again before the year closes."

The echo of that "never again" still rang in Ida's ears, and she shook her head hopelessly.

"My darling," said Elizabeth, bending forward, and speaking very earnestly, "you must not misjudge Arthur; he is under a wrong impression now; but you will be able to *live it down*. When he returns (as return he surely will), you may have much to go through; but his is too just and generous a mind not to acknowledge your efforts to do right in the end. Try and live a good life more to win God's

approval than even to regain your husband's confidence and affection, and in due time you will obtain both."

"But, Elizabeth, if he *never* returns, if I never have the opportunity of proving that I love him! He thinks, himself, that he shall die abroad. I believe that is one reason why he did not take me Oh! I could not bear it! I could not! I could not!"

"Hush, dear, hush!" said the elder sister, as she rose, and gathered the slight trembling form in her arms. "You must not give way; bear up a little longer, and the light will come. I have a firm persuasion that before this year is out, I shall see you a happy wife once more."

"A happy wife!" murmured the wretched girl, as her fair head drooped on that kind sister's shoulder. "No, no, Elizabeth, not that; contented I may be, perhaps forgiven, but *happy*, never, never!"

It was useless to argue with her. Such a settled despondency was best met by love and silence. A few days after, Ida pas-

sively allowed herself to be taken to Eastbourne, only rousing herself for a moment to bid a grateful farewell to kind-hearted Mrs. Gillot.

Let us leave them for a while, and betake ourselves to the summer regions of the continent.

Perhaps there is not a prettier and more fascinating little town in all Western France than Le Mans, situated in the midst of a country almost English in its greenness and fertility, and inhabited by a singularly kind and hospitable people.

There is an old-world freshness and simplicity about these little visited spots in the great continent. To the learned traveller Le Mans is charming, as containing many interesting relics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while an artist would luxuriate in the long, quaint streets, lined with antiquated houses, built entirely of wood, one of which (in the Rue de l'Hopiteau) has certainly stood there for at least four hundred years. But it is not with interesting relics or ancient buildings

that we have to do, but with a small party of ladies and gentlemen who are sitting in the little parlour of "La Boule d'Or," the small, but very excellent hotel. The party consists of three ladies—a mother, and two daughters—and their father, a pleasant, out-spoken, grey-headed man—unmistakably American—also a gentleman who might be a travelling artist, or a young student in search of health, and a young man of perhaps thirty, tall, grave, and very handsome, but with a melancholy, pre-occupied expression of countenance, which has inspired the younger of the two girls with considerable interest and curiosity. He is unmistakably a person of some consequence, from the unusual respect paid him by the waiter, and from the unmistakable calm, dignified bearing which belongs almost solely to our English aristocracy.

Noting these signs, about the middle of the second course our American friend leaned across the table, and addressed the silent stranger.

"It is not very common to meet an Englishman in these unfrequented parts, sir. Are you making a long stay in Le Mans?"

"I intend remaining here some days," was the answer, given with as much brevity as was compatible with a very dry civility.

"Ah, that shows you are a man of taste; many people would find it dull, but the repositories of ancient art are always interesting and congenial to the scientific mind. I presume that you care for sketching?"

"I draw a little at times."

"Well, there are some pretty views to be taken from the banks of the river here—the Sarthe, you know—a dull, sluggish stream in itself, but I believe there is fair fishing. Have you been over the cathedral?"

"No; I only arrived two hours ago."

"Then let me recommend you to devote a whole morning to that most interesting building. It is really a magnificent struc-

ture, and the violet hues of the painted quarries in the Lady Chapel are only to be surpassed by those in the Sainte Chapelle, in Paris. There are also some very fine sculptures."

"Indeed ; I do not take very much interest in ecclesiastical art."

"The modern west window destroys the effect of the building, to my mind," put in the mother, with a critical air ; "it resembles a dessert service of Worcester ware."

"The old Penitentiary House of the Cathedral Chapter is worth a sketch," said the younger daughter, timidly. "It is in that curious old Rue de Chanonies."

"Talking of the Rue de Chanonies," said her father to the young man who might be a Cambridge student, "how is that poor young Englishman you were befriending yesterday ? Have you seen him to-day ?"

"Yes," answered the young man, gazing with his mild, blue, spectacled eyes at his interlocutor, "I was with him for some time

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this morning. It is a very bad case; all but hopeless, I should say."

"Did you discover his name?"

"Ah, yes, I came upon a card in his portmanteau, but I have left it upstairs. Unfortunately, there is no address."

"What is the name?"

"Ayrton, Ayrston, something like that. I have such a bad memory for names."

The attention of the young English stranger seemed to be aroused, and he inquired the particulars of the story from the student, who was evidently a kind-hearted young man, but very nervous, and much abashed by the keen glance of those dark eyes.

"I came upon the poor young man at Chartres; he seemed unwell then, and we travelled together for some way, till it became evident to me that he was labouring under a serious attack of fever, though he would not acknowledge that it was anything but a severe chill. However, when we reached this place, he was past speech, and I could not leave him in the lurch,

so, as they refused to receive him here, I found a quiet little lodging for him in the Rue de Chanonies. The landlady is very kind-hearted and attentive, but has not the faintest idea of nursing. However, it does not much signify to him, poor fellow, he will scarcely survive the week."

"Are you a medical student?" inquired the Englishman, who, as our readers will have guessed, was Lord Trevor himself.

"I am."

"Then of course you will have ascertained that this is not an infectious fever?" inquired the American matron, rather anxiously.

A slight flush rose to the young man's brow.

"There is always a *risk* of infection in these kind of fevers," he replied, "but I never come to the table d'hôte without making a thorough change of clothes, and I believe in any case there is little danger through a second person."



"The only thing I dread is scarlet fever."

"It is certainly not that."

"I should like to see the card," said Lord Trevor, "it sounds like an English name."

"With the greatest pleasure. Perhaps you may know it," replied the student, eagerly, and in another moment it was placed in Lord Trevor's hand.

No wonder that his cheeks blanched, and the card fell from his trembling hold, for there was printed the name he had never thought to see again—"Captain Atherstone."

He looked up at once, and inquired, with a voice which his utmost endeavour could not prevent from sounding hoarse and agitated;

"I do know him, he—he is a great friend of mine. Tell me the number in the Rue de Chanonies. I will go at once."

"Not alone," was the eager answer. "I have had enough dinner, I will come with you."

And in the space of another minute the two young men had left the table d'hôte room, much to the surprise and chagrin of the waiter, leaving their dinners almost untasted, and the American lady with her hands uplifted in astonishment.

"How like these English," she exclaimed, "always in extremes. Just now we could scarcely get a civil answer out of my young mi-lord, he sat as if nothing short of an earthquake would shake his stolidity, and only look at him now."

"Young Englishmen are all alike," replied her husband, "cold manners and warm hearts. They are, in reality, the most enthusiastic nation in the world, only they are too proud to show it."

"He has lovely eyes, at any rate, and a divine profile," sighed the younger daughter, for which candid expression of opinion she was duly snubbed and rebuked by her elder sister.

During that hot, hurried walk, Lord Trevor discovered that his companion's name was "Rüger," and that he was

neither a collegiate nor an artist, but a young German medical student, who had been partly educated in England, and was now making a quiet tour to recover strength after a severe attack of small-pox. The disease had somewhat disfigured his small, pale countenance, and in general appearance he was extremely insignificant, but there was a great kindness and simplicity about the expression of his face, and his manner, though nervous, was very gentleman-like, while his anxiety about his patient was most genuine and quite disinterested, for he imagined him to be as poor as himself. When undeceived on this point he expressed much surprise, stating that Captain Atherstone was travelling with no servant, only one small portman-teau, and none of the little luxuries that wealthy young Englishmen usually regard as necessities.

On reaching the small room where the sick man had found a shelter, they found that Madame Dubois, the good-hearted but not very intelligent landlady, had turned

the blinds the light side, in order, as she said, to make the room more cheerful, and then had opened the window and door on account of the heat, so that the patient was lying in a thorough draught, with the scorching rays of June sunshine falling almost untempered on his head. Though little used to sickness, Lord Trevor perceived at once that this plan "*n'avait pas le sens commun*," and it did not need the young German's horrified exclamation to prompt him to darken the room and close the door. He then walked to the little low bedstead, and gazed with an intense anxiety upon his sick friend. Arthur was lying quite still now, and might have been sleeping save for an occasional moan, which told of the pain which made even a minute's rest an impossibility. The sunny hair lay damp and heavy on his forehead, wet with the ice that had constantly to be renewed, his blue eyes were glazed and only half closed, and there was the unmistakable burning flush of fever on the face and form that when last seen by Lord Trevor had

seemed the perfection of manly strength and comeliness.

He never knew how long he stood gazing at the mournful sight, but as he turned away his eyes were dimmed with tears that were little disgrace to his manhood, but which were, nevertheless, brushed angrily away as he asked in the low, abrupt tone of a suppressed emotion if Herr Rüger were satisfied with his patient. The young man shrugged his shoulders slightly, and sighed.

"Nothing can be said till there is some change," he replied. "He has been like this for nearly a week now—a whole week to-morrow. He must go on with that draught, and be kept cool and quiet. I can do no more."

"I will have a doctor from Paris," burst from Lord Trevor's impetuous lips.

"As your lordship pleases, but it is a needless trouble and expense."

"The expense is nothing; he *must* be saved."

"Good, careful, sensible nursing would

do more for him than the whole College of Physicians," was the reply.

"He shall have that. I will stay here myself. He shall be left to no hired nurses."

"Has your lordship considered the risk of infection and the fatigue? This is a case which will require constant watching for many days to come."

"I have considered everything. Can you" (turning to Madame Dubois, and speaking French) "give me a bed here? I will make it well worth your while."

Either Lord Trevor's French was too Parisian for the provincial landlady, or (more likely supposition) his hurried, peremptory manner somewhat appalled her, for she glanced appealingly at Herr Rüger, and murmured something unintelligible. He came at once to the rescue, and after a good deal of French exclamations and shrugs, his stolid German persistence carried the point, and his lordship was accommodated with a small back room, very dark and close, and horribly suggestive of crawl-

ing things, but under the circumstances he would eagerly have caught at a much worse lodging. His boxes had to be left at the hotel, there was barely room for a small bag and a few books.

It was a strange fate that had thrown the two young men together at this little out-of-the-way French town, though not quite so strange as might appear at first. The year before Arthur's marriage they had settled to make a tour together through the small, picturesque, unfrequented towns of western France; art was the attraction to one, and novelty to the other. The plan had fallen to the ground, as such delicious plans usually do, but the idea had not been forgotten, and when necessity had driven them abroad, each had unconsciously chosen the old route they had often discussed in happier days.

Now began a strange sort of existence for Lord Trevor. In spite of his utter want of experience, he did not make a bad nurse—affection and anxiety were of more value than science in such a case, and *Mr. Rüger*

(as he preferred to be called) was a sympathetic and most invaluable help-meet. To one so accustomed to out-of-door life and exercise, the confinement became at times almost insupportable; and once, to his utter disgust, the close atmosphere of the little room made him quite faint, and he was obliged to rush precipitately into the fresh air.

The nursing itself, too, was even more monotonous than nursing usually is. Besides changing the wet cloths on the head, and arranging and re-arranging the bed-clothes, there was little to be done, save to give the medicine and occasionally hold a glass of cool drink to the parched lips. But he never flagged, never wearied in his self-imposed task. No woman's hand could have been more gentle than his; no mother's eye more keen and watchful.

For some days no gleam of consciousness came to Arthur, and then he was only himself for a few moments at a time, soon wandering off again into delirium or sinking into stupor. During these intervals he



appeared to recognize his friend ; but it seemed as if the memory of events that had lately taken place had quite faded from his mind. He spoke to him with the old loving familiarity, and, though he often talked of his mother and his dead sister, never once alluded to his wife. But when the feverish cloud again obscured his spirit, the weary load of anguish again made itself felt, and he would murmur the name "Ida" over and over again, sometimes in tones of love, sometimes even with tears, but never as connected with any happy or satisfactory idea.

The French doctor came down from Paris, summoned by Lord Trevor; but his opinion was too guarded to be either re-assuring or the reverse. He bowed, gesticulated, smiled, and waved away with his white ringed hand any direct question that was put to him, and finally pocketed his enormous fee and departed, leaving Lord Trevor not much wiser than before.

Still, it was a comfort to be assured that all was being done that could be done, and

he was a good deal cheered by the recommendation given by the French doctor to remove the fever-stricken patient as soon as possible away from Le Mans. Why should such advice have been given if he had not imagined there was any possibility of its being required?

So the days passed away, till one sultry morning Mr. Rüger entered the little room to find Lord Trevor standing by the window, trying to refresh himself with a breath of the open air, though what breeze there was was almost as scorching as the blast from a furnace.

"This won't do, my lord," said the young doctor, decidedly. "You are wearing yourself out. Your pulse is almost as high as *his* this morning," and he glanced at the prostrate figure on the bed. "Consider how enormously you increase the chance of infection by allowing yourself to lapse into this feverish state. Let me persuade you to go out for a walk this morning."

"It is too hot."

"Not so hot as it will be a few hours

hence ; but you can wait till the cool of the evening if you like. Only get out some time."

" Well, I will see about it. Do you see any change in Captain Atherstone?"

Mr. Rüger went to the bed-side, and gazed long and earnestly on the unconscious face, then looked up, with his hand on the pulse.

" In a few hours there *will* be a change," he said, in a low voice. " Before to-day closes we shall probably know if he is to live or die. The fever is leaving him rapidly, but I fear the subsequent exhaustion even more."

" You think he will soon recover consciousness?"

" I am sure of it. See, even now his pulse is lower, and the fever flush has left him. Still, there is an affection of the heart, which must make recovery most doubtful. I do not wish to delude you with an almost hopeless hope."

" If he lives over to-morrow, shall you be more sanguine."

“If he survives to-night I shall be”—he was about to say “astonished,” but turned it into “much relieved.”

“Then I shall certainly not leave him. Thank you, Mr. Rüger; you have been a true friend.”

The young German bowed over the hand kindly extended to him, and took his leave, promising to look in again before evening, and the two friends were once more left alone.

Lord Trevor now felt himself to be in a very difficult and delicate position. He had hitherto always intended to give up his office as nurse, and leave Le Mans, if possible, before Arthur's feverish brain had sufficiently righted itself for him to recollect the occurrences of the last month.

From a few hasty words dropped the night of Mrs. Douglas's party, he felt sure that Arthur considered him the cause of all the mischief and sorrow that had taken place. What, then, would he feel when he knew that this false friend had been nursing him for days—that to his unre-

mitting care, humanly speaking, he owed his very life? What sort of a reception could he expect when those dear eyes should once more meet his in all their native keenness, and full understanding and recollection should again return? Yet how was it possible to leave him in this critical state? So far from danger being over when the fever departed (as he had before hoped), Mr. Rüger seemed to think the worst was yet to come. How could he bear to think of Arthur's struggling through the long weary days of convalescence (if indeed he *did* recover) alone, save for the charitable care of Mr. Rüger, and the rough, ignorant, though kind-hearted nursing of Madame Dubois?

No, it was *not* possible. He would sooner face any amount of misconception and reproach, sooner encounter even the far harder trial of being obliged to receive a cold and reluctant gratitude for having saved a life he had done his best to embitter.

So, sadly musing, the hours passed away,

and Lord Trevor sat in the same despondent attitude, his hot head resting on his hand, and ever aching with a weary persistence that seemed almost to paralyse thought.

About four o'clock there was a sound from the bed, and, hastily turning, he met Arthur's blue eyes gazing calmly at him, and he saw that the dark red flush had left the brow and cheek, and given place to a deadly whiteness.

"Is that you, Trevor? How long have you been here?"

The tone was so quiet and natural, that Lord Trevor's heart leapt with joy, in spite of a momentary qualm at the long-dreaded recognition. He walked to the bed-side, and took one of the feeble hands in his.

"I have been here some days. You are much better, Arthur. Will you try and drink this?"

He obeyed, and then sank back on the pillow, still gazing earnestly at his friend, whose eyes were studiously averted.

"Tell me about it all, Trevor; I don't

seem to recollect. We weren't travelling together, were we?"

"No; it was accidentally that I heard of your being here. Mr. Rüger, a young German doctor——"

"Oh! I remember. We met at Chartres. He tried to persuade me that I was going to be very ill, but I wouldn't believe him. My brain seems confused still. I can't recollect. Where is Ida?"

"Don't try to recollect anything now; you are too weak to think," answered Lord Trevor, hastily; for he had his hand on the pulse, and it seemed to him that the faint beats were becoming less perceptible every minute.

At this moment, to his intense relief, Mr. Rüger entered the room. He bent anxiously down to examine the patient, but looked up almost immediately with a smile of congratulation.

"This is well indeed! Has he taken the cordial?"

"Yes, directly he spoke. What is this—is he fainting?"

“No, no ; it is a quiet and natural sleep, out of which he will wake, please God, a different man.”

They both stood for several minutes by the bedside watching the calm face, which, white and exhausted as it was, seemed already to bear the earnest of recovery in the relaxed lines and quiet, peaceful expression. Mr. Rüger stayed for upwards of an hour, but that saving sleep still continued, and he whispered, as he took his leave for the night—“I believe he will do well now ; he is gaining strength with every moment of rest. If he wakes, give him the cordial at once, and, above all things, keep him perfectly quiet.”

Easier said than done. When Arthur woke, he would probably be in full possession of his senses and his memory, and how would it then be possible to guard against the agitating recollections which a sight of the face he had last seen in such distressing circumstances would surely bring to his mind ?

In most intense anxiety Lord Trevor



waited and watched. The night wore away, and in the cool of the early morning Arthur awoke. Lord Trevor bent over him, and held the drink to his lips, supporting the feeble head with one strong hand.

The blue eyes were calm and sensible enough now, and to Lord Trevor's bitter sorrow they met his anxious gaze with a look of cold aversion it was impossible to mistake. He swallowed the cordial, for he could not help doing so, but immediately after he repulsed the kind hand that would have settled his pillows with all his feeble force, and murmured—

“Thank you, I would rather be left alone ; I shall do very well now.”

A poor return for those long, weary days of watching and musing ! But little recked Lord Trevor.

“I must stay with you, Arthur,” he replied steadily, in spite of the bitter, aching pain at his heart. “You are not fit to be alone a moment, though you are much better.”

"Have I said something ungrateful and unkind?" asked Arthur, in a stronger voice. "I did not mean it. I don't think my head is quite clear yet. You have been most kind, Trevor. I—I—must thank you. How long have you been here, looking after me?"

"A fortnight yesterday."

"That is a long time."

"Not longer than you nursed me in India."

"Ah! it was different then."

Silence for a moment; then Arthur spoke again, very feebly.

"What are the chances of my recovery? You need not be afraid to tell me the truth."

"Mr. Rüger thinks you will do very well now. But we have talked enough, Arthur; you are to be kept very quiet."

"Very well; but—let me see. Is it the green shade from that blind, or are you really looking so ill? Surely you have not been sitting up all these nights with me?"

"Of course, you could not be left; but I

have done very well. Now try to sleep again, Arthur ; if I see you quiet I will go and lie down."

"Do ; I can't bear to see you sitting there looking so worn out. Pray go, Trevor—*pray*."

Lord Trevor thought it best not to oppose him, though feeling a little uncertain whether Arthur was not quite as anxious to get rid of him as to know that he was resting.

He went into the next room and lay down on the bed, fully resolved to be awake to every sound and movement, but exhausted nature was too much even for his iron will, and he fell into a heavy sleep.

He woke with a start, and saw Mr. Rüger standing over him, the plain, kindly little face looking rather anxious.

"I am glad you are resting, my lord ; you are very feverish. Lie down again."

"No, no ; I must go to Captain Atherstone. Is he awake ?"

"Yes; and much better. You English have wonderful constitutions."

"You think he will pull through now?"

"I have very little fear. Take care, my lord"—for Lord Trevor, in striving to rise, had staggered, and would have fallen but for the quick arm that just saved him.

"I am dizzy with the heat," he said, half annoyed at the scrutinizing gaze of the little doctor. "Give me a glass of water, and I shall be all right."

He hastily drank the water, stood for a moment to inhale a breath of fresh air from the open window, and then, in spite of Mr. Rüger's earnest advice, persisted in returning to the patient.

He found Arthur half sitting up, supported by pillows, looking wonderfully rested and refreshed, though his voice was so weak that Lord Trevor had to bend down to catch the cheerful words—

"I am getting on, Trevor. Mr. Rüger thinks me a marvel."

"Yes, I see you are better. How is your head?"

"Well, it aches, but the confusion is all gone. Do you think Ida ought to be sent for?"

The abrupt question brought the blood to Lord Trevor's cheek, and he answered almost at random, feeling intensely conscious of the keen gaze of those bright blue eyes.

"Well, yes; I should think so. At least, I don't know; Rüger is the best judge."

"There is no danger of infection now?"

"I should think not, if precautions were taken. You ought certainly not to be left alone till you can travel."

Arthur lay still for a few minutes, and then spoke in a stronger voice, his eyes never leaving his friend's worn, handsome profile.

"Sometimes, Trevor, I think I have been unjust to that poor child; but I meant to act for the best. You are the only person on earth that can fully enlighten me, and I suppose it is too much to expect that you should—tell me *all* the truth."

Lord Trevor hastily glanced round the room, but Mr. Rüger had gone to give some directions to the landlady, and they were alone. He bent over Arthur, not avoiding his glance now, but meeting it openly with his dark, candid eyes.

“I think you *have* been unjust, Arthur. You must have said something terrible to your wife to induce her to leave you as she did. Yet a little harmless coquetry from a beautiful girl scarcely deserved so severe a punishment as to be banished for ever from her only home.”

“A little harmless coquetry! You can say that to me?”

“Yes, for it is the truth. She was not quite nineteen, and as unused to the ways of the world as a baby. She never realized the mischief she was doing, and I (give me credit at least for that)—I never told her till I came to bid her farewell for ever, and thought it might be a warning for the future.”

“Then you never tried to win her love?”

“Never; I swear it.”

"But you have gained it."

"I have no reason to think so."

The words were uttered with an emphasis that could leave no doubt of their truth in so candid a mind as Arthur's. He could not speak more just then, but later in the day he asked to have his writing things brought to him.

"Let me do it for you," said Lord Trevor; "you are too weak to write."

"I am afraid so," as the pen dropped from his trembling fingers. "It will not give you much trouble, Trevor: just a line in my name to Ida asking her to come to me."

The words were dictated—only a few affectionate lines that would carry joy to the heart of the poor young wife.

"Please add a postscript," said Arthur, "just to advise her to bring Drury, the housemaid at Arling. She has been a great traveller, and my mother would gladly spare her. She is a good nurse, too. Have you finished?"

"Yes, will that do?"

He read the few words aloud, and, quite satisfied, Arthur closed his eyes, murmuring, "She will be here in three days. My poor little Ida!"

The night passed tranquilly, and next day Lord Trevor told Mr. Rüger that Mrs. Atherstone had been sent for, and would bring an old experienced servant with her. There was no reason, therefore, why he should remain longer in Le Mans, "And," he concluded wearily, "I shall be glad to get away, for I am afraid I could not be of much use. I have been feeling very ill yesterday and to-day."

"Take my advice, my lord, and stay where you are, or return to the hotel. You are not fit to travel."

To this no answer was returned, and it was plain that he intended to take his own way. Mr. Rüger regretted the imprudence, for he had found himself strongly attracted by the haughty, reserved, self-sacrificing young Englishman, and he had little doubt that the fever had but left one victim to fasten on the other. If it was



so, travelling in this weather would be suicidal, and he determined to ask Captain Atherstone to use his influence to deter his lordship from so dangerous an experiment. But when he paid his evening visit, he heard with dismay that he was too late; Lord Trevor had gone, and had left no address, saying that his movements were uncertain, but promising to write. The parting between the friends had been very brief, but full of comfort to both.

“Good-bye, Trevor, you are a noble fellow. I thank you from my heart for what you have told me, even more than for all you have done for me. Thanks to you, my life is still worth having.”

“Good-bye, Arthur; you will soon get strong now. Mrs. Atherstone will be here before you have had time to miss me.”

And he was gone. Not an hour too soon, for even as he left the room an almost overpowering sensation of illness came over him, and he felt if he had delayed a day Mr. Rüger would have two patients on his hands instead of one. Anything was better

than the chance of meeting Ida, and he hoped that a short rest at Chartres would recruit his failing strength.

In the evening of the second day after his departure Ida arrived, accompanied by the faithful Mrs. Drury and Elizabeth. Weary and travel-stained as she was, she had never seemed so lovely in Arthur's eyes as when she knelt down at his bedside and clasped the thin white hands in hers, as she sobbed—

“Oh, my darling, thank you for sending for me at last!”

There was no mistaking the love in her tender, eager voice; and though the excitement made his heart beat dangerously, Mr. Rüger was not alarmed, for Arthur sank back on his pillows with a look of perfect thankfulness and rest. During the days of convalescence that followed, he had three tender, careful nurses, but Ida grudged them every moment spent with him, and felt it a cruel hardship to be compelled to spare some hours for rest and refreshment every day. Who would have

prophesied a few months ago that Ida, selfish, inconsiderate, excitable, would ever make even a tolerable nurse? But love is a wondrous teacher, and she who had always hated the very idea of a sick room, even with every appliance of luxury and comfort, could scarcely now be persuaded to quit the hot, dingy little closet where her husband lay. It was a Paradise on earth to her, and for him no pain or weariness seemed to be felt while that golden head was within sight, and the fair little hands, (whose touch he always recognized, even at night) were ministering around him. All doubts, reproaches, jealousies, were over now, as if they had never been. She told him everything (and he, knowing all), had blessed and forgiven her.

### CHAPTER XIII.

“Why shouldst thou fear the beautiful angel, Death,  
Who waits thee at the portals of the skies,  
Ready to kiss away thy trembling breath,  
Ready with gentle hand to close thine eyes?”

PROCTOR.

THE weary journey to Chartres was accomplished at last, but that fertile and beautiful country might have been as desolate as the desert of Sahara for all the pleasure it gave to Lord Trevor. By the time he reached the Hôtel de France he was past wishing or caring for anything except that Mr. Rüger were not so many miles away.

It was a dreary place to be ill in. Few Englishmen are ever seen at Chartres; it is a place devoted to trade, and divides

with Etampes the honour of being the great grain mart of the empire. The noise, heat, and bustle completed the confusion of brain which the din of the railway had greatly increased, and the poor young man, never at the best of times a good French scholar, found it next to impossible to understand or make himself understood.

But his hostess was fortunately as quick-witted as she was kind-hearted, and, soon comprehending the state of the case, lodged her almost helpless visitor in a comfortable, airy room, and sent off at once for the "médecin." He soon arrived—a small, active, voluble little man, who threw up his hands in dismay when he felt his patient's pulse, and heard that he had just come from the railroad.

The fever never arrived at the height which had nearly ended Arthur's life, but ten long weary days passed away before Lord Trevor could raise his head from the pillow, or recollect clearly where he was and how he came there.

And now began the most trying time of

all. Patience never had been one of his lordship's distinguishing characteristics; he was wholly unused to illness, and greatly retarded his own recovery by an almost childish restlessness and discontent. It was no great wonder; his was a far harder case than Arthur's had been. There was no kind hand to smooth *his* pillow, no soothing voice to whisper hope and comfort when the weary depression, which is an invariable attendant of low fever, succeeded to the delirium, and proved a much greater trial.

All that was absolutely necessary was done, and done kindly, but it is a mournful thing to be ill in a foreign land, with no single friend at hand, no one to whom it is of the slightest *real* consequence whether one lives or dies! How often, lying on the narrow, hard bed, in that almost tropical heat, with no friendly hand to cool his burning forehead, or arrange the scanty, tumbled bedclothes, did he feel that he would gladly exchange his wealth and his title for one breath of fresh air from the

far-off Sussex Downs, or one half-hour of the tender care that had nursed him long ago in India !

Sometimes he would fancy himself again at Arling Grange, following the hounds over the breezy English fields ; and in the momentary exhilaration of that remembrance he would start up from his fevered pillow, only to sink back with a groan as the sharp pang of agony in his head recalled him to the present, and to the consciousness that many hundred miles lay between him and the pleasant scenes he was doomed never to see again. Then these visions faded away, and in their places a graceful figure seemed to be standing near him, robed in white, with a red camellia in her hand. Again he saw the golden hair, and the bright sunny face, with the arch, sweet smile that had taken his heart captive so long ago.

“ Ah, Ida ! Ida ! your bright beauty and winning ways have done more mischief than you know, even *now*, in your bitter repent-

ance. There is a sharp stroke of retribution still in store for you !

Many a heartless woman and fickle girl has been reassured by the old Shakespearian adage that

“ Men have died, and worms have eaten them,  
But *not for love.*”

Is that comforting sentiment *really* true ? Whatever takes the heart and spirit out of a man, and leaves him to fight the battle of life deprived of youth's most precious gifts—a fair past, a hopeful future—is surely responsible if he fails in the unequal strife. Deprive a soldier of his armour or weapons, and send him forth to combat with his enemies defenceless and shorn. If he fall, shall not you be held answerable ? Surely.

A low, winning voice, a false, sweet smile, have done as sure execution before now as any weapon of destruction ever formed by man !

When the fever left him, Lord Trevor *ought* to have recovered. M. Rouceau, a clever little man in his way, fully expected



it. His patient had a fine constitution and a magnificent, robust physique, which was a daily matter of astonishment and admiration to the small, slender little Gascon. Also, he had not to struggle against that weakness of the heart which was Arthur's most subtle and dangerous enemy. But whether it was that the French "tisanes" had no effect on that sturdy English frame, or that the stifling atmosphere breathed for so many days and nights in Arthur's room acted like poison on one accustomed to an out-of-door, active life, certain it is that the long-expected rally never came.

M. Rouceau shrugged his shoulders higher each day, and muttered continually, "C'est incroyable, je ne le comprends pas du tout," as he perceived his patient's daily decline, while his most powerful tonics seemed to have no more effect than so much cold water.

Alas! there was no wise friend at hand to cheer his sinking spirit, and try to raise the sorrowful thoughts from earth's disappointments and trials, to that Home where

alone true rest and peace are to be attained. But there was nothing to distract his thoughts, nothing to hinder him from continually dwelling on the sad memory of his hopeless love. It was *this* that hindered his recovery, *this* that made him view every remedy proposed with hostility, or at best with indifference, as a means of lengthening out an existence which had lost all charm for him.

What had he to live for? If he returned to England, it would be to throw himself wilfully in the way of a temptation which had already proved more than a match for his strength; if he remained abroad, he was separated from all the amusements and employments most congenial to him, and would probably never make one friend to replace those he had left behind. It never occurred to him as a source of satisfaction that he had, as much as any hero of ancient or modern days, "laid down his life for his friend." It had come so naturally to him to go to Arthur's assistance when he found him helpless and alone, and it had never occurred

to him to sacrifice his friend's comfort in the smallest degree that he might spare time for the rest and exercise which might have saved his life. Those sixteen days of patient, untiring devotion seemed as nothing to him now; he took no credit for them: surely it was no more than one true friend would do for another.

Lord Trevor had never been an irreligious man. For a young man in his position, and with his temptations, he had been a singularly pure and blameless life, obscured only by one dark blot. The same thought that had embittered his life now came to harass his dying hours. He *could* not forget Ida Atherstone. A man of less tender conscience would have consoled himself with the reflection that he had done all that was possible for man to do; he had never, save in that last interview, uttered a word to her which might not have been heard by Arthur himself, and he had forsaken his country and his friends that he might put himself more completely out of temptation.

Other men might have thought his conduct irreproachable, disinterested, even noble (Arthur himself had said so), but it would never appear so to *him*. He only knew how he had cherished that sweet, dangerous affection instead of casting it forth from his heart as a thing to be utterly crushed and condemned; he only knew that if Ida had ever shown any sincere feeling, the slightest spark of real attachment to himself, their past had not been so blameless. Yet surely he had fought his hard battle well and nobly, though he had not come out unscarred from the conflict.

"The knights are dust,  
Their good swords rust,  
Their souls are with the saints, we trust."

Yes, though some will have it that the race of men have degenerated and become effeminate since the good old days of King Arthur and his Round Table, there are some now living whose faithful hearts and self-denying lives would not have disgraced those brave warriors of old. The "days of

chivalry" are not over, and many a deed has been wrought in our formal, uninteresting, and most unromantic clique, termed society, which for true valour and generosity has never been eclipsed by any belted knight of the olden time. Men do not in these days ride about clad in armour, waging war against all forms of oppression and wrong; but the fiercest enemies are those who are invisible, and whose weapons are not of steel or iron, or to be withstood by such.

"The writhings of a wounded heart  
Are fiercer than a foeman's dart."

It is less painful to shed blood, than tears, and the grandest battles have been fought in solitude, when the conflict has been secret, and the victory unknown to fame. So, in that solitary little room in the strange foreign town, surrounded only by strangers, who were not even countrymen, the conviction came to Launcelot Trevor that his last battle was very near at hand.

With a feeling that was almost horror at first, but which gradually deepened into a most perfect thankfulness and peace, he came to realize that Death—that strange, irresistible power, at once the most powerful and the least regarded influence in this world—was approaching his bedside, with quick though stealthy strides.

He did not write for any friend to come to him ; he could not have held a pen, and the people round him were utterly incompetent to write from his dictation, or he thought so. Had it been possible, he would have felt it his duty to send to his mother, but, as it was, he did not regret that she knew nothing of his illness. He had little fancy for death-bed scenes, and there was something congenial to his proud, reserved nature, in thus dying alone, well nigh as unnoticed and unpitied as the wounded stag, which retires into the deepest recesses of the forest to draw his last breath.

Monsieur Rouceau, however, discovered a card in his patient's travelling-bag, and

wrote a few lines to the address there mentioned, which arrived safely at Castle Trevor, and was forwarded to his mother after a little delay, owing to the incorrectness of the direction.

The little doctor dared not mention what he had done to his patient, who had said once or twice that he wished no one to be sent for, and, as it turned out, it made no difference to him.

Long before his mother received the letter, Lord Trevor had passed away, in the early dawn of a glorious July morning, a soft air blowing in from the open window on the faint, dying face, almost as freshly sweet as those pure breezes of the native land he had loved so well.

While dressing him for the grave, the simple, kindly French people found an envelope containing a faded red camellia, which he had always worn next his heart, and judging rightly that the flower must have been a "gage d'amour," they let it remain there, and it was buried with him. So when the almost broken-hearted Lady

Trevor arrived from England, they showed her a green mound in the little cemetery, and told her that her son slept beneath.

Lie there in peace, brave, erring heart, slain in the prime of youth and glorious manhood, by a woman's thoughtless vanity, slain by the overwhelming destructive force of an affection which he refused either to indulge or dismiss. Who shall dare to judge thee now? Who shall say that the battle so nobly fought, so *nearly* won, shall not count for a victory hereafter? The stormy sea of life is past now, and the calm, fathomless ocean of eternity is bearing thee on its deep, tranquil flood—whither?



## CHAPTER XIV.

"Not Launcelot, or another."

TENNYSON.

THE Atherstones were at Paris when they heard of Lord Trevor's death from an English correspondent. Arthur's recovery had been a slow and tedious affair; the heart disease, which might have remained dormant for years, had been accelerated by anxiety and over exertion (he himself always traced the first symptoms from the night he had taken that wet, hurried ride from Richmond to London), and he felt that his life hung upon a thread.

Ida scarce knew whether to tell him of the death of his friend, or to delay the tidings till he should be stronger; but there

was always the chance of his hearing of it accidentally, which would be even more dangerous, so at last she determined to tell him. It was well, for he must soon have discovered from her manner that something was amiss.

This news had put the finishing stroke to the remorse for the errors of her life, which were already weighing her almost to the ground. She rightly considered herself in some sort his destroyer, but her grief was no longer that wild, almost delirious thing, which had once made Elizabeth almost tremble for her reason. But from this time she was changed, utterly changed. From a gay, light-hearted girl, she became a grave, silent woman, with a calm, gentle manner, only to be stirred into excitement by anything that concerned her husband.

He, too, mourned over Lord Trevor's sad, solitary death, but there was none of the bitterness of self-reproach in *his* grief, and he felt that the love which had united them was stronger than the grave. Yet

his sorrow was deep and lifelong for the bright hopes blighted, the active, useful career, so prematurely cut off, and he would have sacrificed gladly any earthly possession to be assured that the kind, brave heart had found peace at last.

The saddened young couple found much comfort in Elizabeth; there was something about her which made you feel that you were living with one who breathed a higher atmosphere than the generality of women. She never intruded her sympathy, but it was always ready when needed, and her gentle tact enabled her to soothe and comfort, where any one else would but have irritated the sore.

In the latter part of August they crossed to Folkestone, and here rested again for a week. The English doctors were more hopeful than the Parisian ones; they thought that Arthur might hope to enjoy many years of life and tolerable health, though he would never again be what he had been. And so indeed it proved. With his mind at ease, with Ida's loving care,

and with the consciousness of her great love casting a sunshine over his life, Arthur made rapid progress, and the despondency which had been his greatest enemy, vanished for ever.

His grief for his friend, though most heartfelt, was not of a nature that saps the springs of life, yet he mourned for Launcelot as for a brother, and those who knew him best said that after that news—though in time he regained his cheerfulness—the bright elasticity, which had been one of his distinguishing characteristics, never came back to him.

Ida had greatly dreaded the return to Arling Grange, but she found herself received with the greatest kindness. Lady Atherstone's good heart melted at once at sight of the pale, imploring face, and with a true mother's instinct she soon divined that her son was at last loved as he deserved. Sir Henry they found much the same, save that increasing weakness of body had operated in the calming of his mind, and

much of the distressing nervous irritability had passed away.

It soon became evident that they could not get on without Elizabeth. Very reluctantly, therefore, she came to live at the Grange, and abandoned all idea of working for her own living. It was a greater act of self-abnegation than any one supposed, the more because the world would think her a gainer.

The rector being an unmarried man, she gradually fell into the old routine, working as in past days under the direction of Mr. Norman, who felt as if halcyon days indeed had come to the parish. For lo! Mrs. Atherstone, that beautiful, fashionable young woman, whom he had once regarded almost with aversion as a sort of embodied "Vanity of the World," had made her appearance in the school, and asked leave to take a class. Nay, she who had once declared that she "had no talent for talking to the lower classes," was now often to be seen in the village, her kind words and sweet bright presence bringing to the full

as much comfort as the luxuries she carried with her.

She had said, almost feverishly, to Elizabeth, "Work is what I want ; I *must* have work. Give me plenty to do."

And she had her wish. Often she wondered how she could ever have found life at Arling dull, every day seemed so full of occupation and interest now. All the quickness and cleverness which had once been wasted or expended on less worthy pursuits, were now devoted to make life cheerful to her husband.

Gradually Lady Atherstone came to look to her for everything, and even Sir Henry's dull eyes brightened at the sight of her sweet face. Many of the old man's long, weary hours were beguiled by her pleasant reading and patient listening to his interminable stories ; and at last he conceived a strange, touching idea that she was his own daughter Mary, returned again to comfort him, and never would call her anything else.

So years passed on, and Ida had her re-

ward in seeing her husband gradually recover his health ; though the consciousness that she held her treasure by a frail tenure was a motive (if motive had been needed) for never relaxing her tender, watchful care. There was not a happier couple in England than they were, though people were much given to pity them, and wonder if they always intended to live in that little dead-alive place, which must be now without a single attraction, since Captain Atherstone was forbidden to hunt.

At last the old man died, and Sir Arthur Atherstone reigned in his stead. Mr. Norman succeeded to the living on the occasion of his rector's promotion to a deanery, and there was not a happier or more prosperous colony in England than that which nestled here under the shadow of the green Sussex Downs.

Lady Laura, the Atherstones never saw again. It was reported that, contrary to the advice of all her friends, she had insisted on marrying a Polish count, whose estates turned out to be situated in the moon, and

his title proved as unsubstantial as his property.

Happily for Alda, she had entered an English Protestant sisterhood before this untimely event, and was saved from sharing her mother's disappointed, poverty-stricken existence. The poor girl had felt that marriage was out of the question for her ; she had no wealth or beauty to attract suitors, and if she had ever loved any one it had been Lord Trevor. The regular, quiet life she had chosen just suited her ; she was loved and appreciated where she was, and never regretted the choice she had made.

In spite of all Mrs. Fletcher's kindly-meant hints and manœuvres, Mr. Norman and Elizabeth Helmore never married ; but they remained true and faithful friends, united by an affection none the less satisfying because it was pure and unmixed with any alloy of earthly passion.

Have my readers forgotten the Black Prince ? The Atherstones had not. Long ago the noble horse had been purchased by them, and was let loose, to end his days



peacefully, in Arling Park, ever cherished and loved for the sake of his master.

In time there were children at Arling Grange, and merry young voices and cheerful footsteps echoed along the corridors and in the long silent nursery. But in all the brightness and serenity that crowned their after years, there was one name seldom uttered, but never forgotten by Arthur and Ida—one memory that was always kept green in their hearts, with the earnest hope that some day they might again meet that much-wronged friend in a land—

“Where beyond these voices there is Peace.”

THE END.

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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 5.5 million women employed in the public sector in 1995, compared with 4.5 million in 1980.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in its workforce. In 1995, 88% of the public sector workforce were women, compared with 78% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

Another reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are part-time or flexible. In 1995, 38% of the public sector workforce were employed on part-time or flexible contracts, compared with 28% in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

A third reason why the public sector has become an important employer of women is that it has a high proportion of jobs that are well paid. In 1995, the average salary of a public sector employee was £18,000, compared with £15,000 in 1980. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that the public sector has a high proportion of jobs that are traditionally held by women, such as teaching, nursing, and social work.

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